D. H. Lawrence

A Personal Record

by

E. T

(Jessie Chambers)

Second Edition *edited by* J. D CHAMBERS



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Introduction to the second edition

by J D Chambers

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND EDITION

For those who wish to see the events of the Lawrence story in the order in which they occurred, it might be advisable to begin with the second of the two memoirs published here (see p 227) It consists of extracts pieced together from the manuscripts written by my sister May Holbrook in the solitude of her prairie schoolhouse in Saskatchewan some thirty years ago They had been left in a box of papers in the charge of her brother Bernard Chambers, at his house in Mervin, Saskatchewan, when she moved to British Columbia When I visited him at Christmas 1956 (after a separation of nearly forty years) I found the MSS and passed them on to Mr Edward Nehls, whose massive work on Lawrence, "D H Lawrence, a Composite Biography" (University of Wisconsin Press, 1957) was then in its final stages of preparation He collated the MSS and included them as a single narrative in "The Chambers Papers" which form part of the third volume of that work

The fact that one of the MSS was typed implies that a second person knew of its existence as she did not

possess a typewriter, but there is no reason to think that any attempt was made to publish it or to bring it to the notice of any other person It is a vivid and, I am quite sure, a truthful record of the early life of D H Lawrence before he left Eastwood in 1908 It is valuable for the light it throws on the sparkling personality of Lawrence as a child, and the glimpse that it gives of the relations of father and son under the blighting influence of the mother is both moving and significant It provides a valuable back-cloth to the second memoir written by her younger sister, Jessie Chambers, and published in 1935 under the pseudonym E T This has long been recognised as an essential source for the study of the early development of Lawrence's mind and character, and it can here be seen in the context of a childhood already deeply influenced by the bitter parental conflicts that poisoned the atmosphere of the Lawrence home

On the relations between my sister and D H Lawrence only one person can speak with the knowledge and insight which deep and lasting friendship with both alone can give Miss Helen Corke (who has made her own contribution to the Lawrence story elsewhere[1]) not only witnessed but participated in the poignant personal drama which followed the publication of "Sons and Lovers", and the deeply sympathetic note which she has contributed to this small volume

[1] Helen Corke, *D H Lawrence's 'Princess', a Memory of Jessie Chambers* (1951)

adds immeasurably to its value I have myself written elsewhere of some of the influences which seem to me to have been important in the relations between Jessie Chambers and D H Lawrence[1] I wish only to add here that the letter sent to me by Lawrence in November 1928 and published in facsimile at the end of this volume was probably the stimulus which prompted her to write the memoir She was not aware of the existence of the letter until some time after Lawrence's death (an event of which she seems to have had some foreknowledge[2]) The letter moved her deeply and the writing of the 'Personal Record' released a flood of memories which the letter and the subsequent death of Lawrence had stirred to life Indeed, though they went back thirty years or more, they were never far below the surface

A word may be added as to the pseudonym E T In 1911 (i e before the publication of "Sons and Lovers") Jessie began writing the story of her friendship with Lawrence under the title 'The Rathe Primrose' It was sent to Ford Madox Hueffer and Edward Garnett, both of whom encouraged her though they did not think the book would be a commercial success When the final break came with Lawrence in 1913, she turned her back on the entire episode, and later burnt the manuscript, together with the letters that

[1] See Edward Nehls, *D H Lawrence a Composite Biography*, (Wisconsin University Press 1957), vol III, pp 531-8

[2] See Harry T Moore, *Life and Works of D H Lawrence* (1951) p 307

had been exchanged between them In the meantime, the title of the book was changed to 'Eunice Temple', and it was under the initials of the central character, E T, that she wrote the 'Personal Record' in 1935 In 1915 she married J R Wood, a Nottinghamshire schoolmaster, and lived happily until her death in 1944 at the age of 58

I do not propose—indeed I am not able—to write of the events described in my sister's memoir They left a searing scar which prevents me, even now, from reading it with the detachment which a proper historical assessment would require, and the letters (deposited in Nottingham University Archives) which she exchanged with Helen Corke on the subject are better left for other eyes than mine I have, therefore, asked my friend, Mr Jack Bramley, to permit the inclusion of his article "D H Lawrence and 'Miriam'" (*The Cornhill, Summer* 1960) as an independent account of this poignant story It brings out the stark ruthlessness with which Lawrence used those whose lot it was to stir his 'daemon' into action, and it hints at the cost in personal terms which the production of a great work of art—the last novel of the nineteenth century it has been said, and one of the most significant of the twentieth[1]—can sometimes entail My only reservation on Mr Bramley's account is in regard to the statement that the Lawrence family "lived in great poverty"

[1] See Harry Moore, *op cit* p 95 and especially Helen Corke *op cit* p 43

(p xxx below) It should be remembered that Mr Lawrence was a "butty" i e an underground contractor in charge of a stall and a gang of stall men He was a highly skilled man, bringing home good money, occupying a house with a bay window and separate 'entry' of which the Lawrences were immensely proud, and handing over to his wife enough money to give three of their five children a good education Lawrence himself went to the Nottingham High School (an Independent Public School today), the Pupil Teachers' Training Centre at Ilkeston and the University College Nottingham, and was not fully independent until he took a job as a schoolmaster in Croydon in 1908 when he was 23 If Arthur Lawrence consoled himself for a loveless marriage at the pub, it was not at the expense of his children's education

In regard to Arthur Lawrence, a contemporary of D H Lawrence writes[1] " Lawrence senior was a skilled miner, recognised and respected as such by others As a butty he shared with others the responsibility for conducting and supervising the extraction of coal and for the safety of the less skilled miners His lack of technical knowledge was the reason for his oft expressed disrespect for his petty bosses which impaired his chances of preferment to more profitable places in the pit Of this Mrs Lawrence made much

[1] From a letter sent to me by Mr J C P Taylor a class mate of D H Lawrence at school See also his series of articles in the *Eastwood and Kimberley Advertiser* beginning December 30th 1960 under the title "Boys of the Beauvale Breed"

Lawrence senior had no welcome except in the pub the Wellington Inn.[1] Though Mr. Lawrence often went home merry he was never drunk nor aggressive. I remember many occasions when Pa Lawrence arrived home merry with Ada and Bert hanging round his neck like a pair of cherries. There seemed no hatred there. . . ." D. H. Lawrence shared with his father an irrepressible gaiety and zest for life, but these inestimable gifts could only be enjoyed at the cost of a sense of treason towards his mother. The memoir written by May Holbrook and presented in the last chapter of this book shows at what an early age this dark shadow fell across his life, and all the other chapters, in their various ways, witness to the influence it exerted during the formative period of his youth and early manhood.

As for the impression left by Lawrence upon our little community at the Haggs, it can best be indicated, perhaps, by the remark made by my father after one of the haymaking picnics we used to have in the fields at Greasley. "Work goes like fun when Bert's there," he said. So did everything else. He lit up our life at the Haggs with his own inextinguishable vitality, and to me, as a child fifteen years his junior, he was like a figure in a fairytale. How we all got into that tiny kitchen I don't know, there were nine of us with Lawrence and probably a friend, and of course, Trip, the white bull terrier, lying across the hearth. But

[1] Generally thought to be the Three Tuns.

there was the parlour, a big low room where we sang, danced, talked, read, played games, above all charades when the house was turned upside down to find props for scenes about Arabs, Israelites, gipsies, funerals (in which I successfully played the corpse twice in one evening on one memorable Christmas occasion) and the old family coach The Haggs looks tired and decayed now, it may even fall down But it will be seen as long as Lawrence's writings live, with honeysuckle and virginia creeper round the porch, and a water pippin at the door and my mother in her white apron coming out to meet him Life at the Haggs was no fairytale, it was very much the real thing but raised to a higher power both in its lights and shades To know him, as we knew him, was a rare privilege, but it had to be paid for, and something of what it cost may be gathered from the pages of this book

J D C

January 1964

An Introductory Note
'MURIEL' AND DAVID
by Helen Corke

'MURIEL' AND DAVID

I AM happy to hear that Jessie Chambers' *D H Lawrence A Personal Record* is to be re-published The orginal edition has been, unfortunately, long out of print This memoir is an authentic record which should remain available to students of Lawrence's life and work as long as these hold significance For here we are shown the roots of the whole matter—the emergence of genius, and the problems arising from it—by the one being within the poet's early environment who was gifted both with a rare intuitional quality and a command of literary expression To these gifts circumstance added the supreme advantage of a mutual friendship which began in childhood and developed normally and wholesomely throughout adolescence Lawrence, one year older than Jessie, and in rebellion against the traditions of his religion, family and class, became her tutor, adviser and mentor in all matters relating to philosophy and the deeper levels of life But Jessie, earnest and devoted pupil as she was, retained her independence of mind

As an intimate friend of both at the period when

their long association was breaking down, I have been asked to write an introductory note to this new edition of Jessie's book The effort involves a return to the years 1909-12, when Lawrence's life crossed with mine His presentation of Jessie as *Emily*, in the MSS of his first novel, then called *Nethermere* but published as *The White Peacock*, gave me my earliest impression of her In a short story, shown to me later, she appeared as *Muriel*, and so vividly did this name express an essential part of her personality that Lawrence used it in introducing her to me, and it was tacitly adopted and accepted by the three of us Jessie's letters to me, now in the Archives Department of Nottingham University, bear that signature

The warm friendship that developed between "Muriel" and myself was based upon our common interest in Lawrence and our mutual recognition of his genius Other things we shared—love of poetry, art, the countryside, even the urge to write—were subsidiary The problem of "Muriel" and "David" became my problem, but I could offer no solution, as only some of its factors were known to me The final section of my novel *Neutral Ground* tries to reflect the situation

During the year 1911 "Muriel" and I shared our school holidays, staying either at her home, Arno Vale Farm at Mapperley, or with my parents in Croydon Day-long walks and talks in what is now termed 'the Lawrence country' deepened the impression of wonder

and romance inspired by *Nethermere* At this time Jessie showed me the earlier chapters of a novel she was writing, an effort to express objectively the experience of her youth The original title of this novel was *The Rathe Primrose*, but later she substituted the name *Eunice Temple* As I saw it, the story was to be a counterpart to Lawrence's novel *Paul Morel* Its style was that of an etching, simple, telling and direct, and I looked forward eagerly to reading it as a whole But the work was still unfinished when in the spring of 1912 Lawrence sent its author the final version of *Paul Morel*, written after his mother's death

The concluding chapter of the present Memoir reflects, realistically and poignantly, Jessie's reaction to the "Miriam" interpretation in the MSS which emerged, in 1913, as *Sons and Lovers* To her it was patent that Lawrence had accepted his mother's judgment upon their friendship, discarding his own By thus perpetuating a false image, and by his subsequent repudiation of the ethical standards they had shared, Lawrence destroyed Jessie's long-loved image of him "David is one of the sons of God", Jessie had once said to me—the words charged with her characteristic intensity Now, it was not merely that a son of God had lost his divinity, but that her own assessment of his nature was in question She had credited him with a strength he did not possess, she had not recognised the measure of his dependence upon his mother's will and direction Her death had

left him like a tall sapling deprived of its support, bending to the winds—he was without sanction for his actions, without faith in his own conclusions From this new aspect of the being to whom, since childhood, she had paid homage, Jessie's spirit shuddered and turned She was ready to repudiate not only Lawrence, but literature and the literary life She destroyed her unfinished novel

There is a reference to the *Personal Record* in a letter written to me soon after Lawrence's death She would leave a simple record of that phase of his life which she alone knew well So we have this unforgettable story, this tragic idyll of the early twentieth century, told as a straightforward and immensely significant piece of autobiography It is indispensable to an understanding of Lawrence's later tortuous development and home-seeking but hopeless wanderings

H C

January 1964

D H. LAWRENCE and 'MIRIAM'

by J A Bramley

D H LAWRENCE AND 'MIRIAM'

As most readers of *Sons and Lovers* know, the character of Miriam in that novel was based on Lawrence's early association with Jessie Chambers She was the second daughter of the smallholder who occupied the Haggs Farm, about four miles from Lawrence's home at Eastwood They met when Jessie was fourteen and Lawrence a year older Apart from her long association with Lawrence, Jessie was a remarkable girl in herself, with a mind and personality that well repays study The consequences of the impact of these two on each other was profound and far-reaching, and has never had adequate justice done to it in the Lawrence story

Lawrence has described vividly his first sight of the girl when he and his mother visited the Haggs in response to an invitation by Mrs Chambers 'In the doorway suddenly appeared a girl in a dirty apron She was about fourteen years old, had a dark rosy face, a bunch of short, black curls, very fine and free, and dark eyes, shy, questioning, a little resentful of strangers, she disappeared' Poor Jessie had recently been taken away from school to become the family

drudge, and was in a state of high rebellion against her lot She has described how she craved for learning, for beauty, and to be allowed to become a sharer in the feast of the human spirit Thus she quickly attracted the attention of young Bert Lawrence, who at this time was attending Nottingham High School in Eton collar and little peaked cap, and who craved for the same kind of nourishment as Jessie A friendship quickly sprang up between the two, which during the next five years ripened and deepened, and was of a most idyllic nature They attended Church together on Sunday evenings, explored the beauties of the adjacent countryside, or made expeditions farther afield in parties, or were to be seen either in the Haggs parlour or in the Lawrences' sitting-room at Eastwood, their heads bowed together over a book When Jessie was seventeen her parents decided, partly at Lawrence's instigation, to send her back to school, so that she could train as a teacher She went to the same teachers' training centre as Lawrence, where the pupils 'earned' their education by teaching for two and a half days in the week and being taught for the remainder She has described these two years as the most completely happy in her life

All this time a deep mental and spiritual awareness had been developing between them, which, on Jessie's side at least, was based on a clear recognition of his genius, the feeling that their many walks and talks together would one day be memorable, and that when

she was with him she was in the presence of greatness She has described how on one outing she saw him stooping in anguish over his umbrella which he appeared to be trying to mend She went up to him and asked him what was wrong He replied that it was his dead brother Ern's umbrella, and that his mother would be wild if it was broken Jessie's heart was wrung by his distress and concern for his mother, and she saw him then as a symbolic figure, which set her eternally wondering and seeking This farm girl was indeed the first person to recognise his genius Moreover, for the next five years, while frequently suffering from heartache and anguish due to the fact that Lawrence had ruled out the possibility of love between them, and later because of his callous and brutal treatment of her, she still devoted herself steadily and unselfishly to the development of his artistic genius She had a wonderful gift of sympathy, a deep intuitive understanding, and a passion for Beauty and things of the spirit, which enabled her to render him a service which he could have obtained from no one else at the time Indeed, he himself acknowledged the debt later when he told her that she was the anvil on which he had hammered himself out

In the meantime Lawrence became more and more of a favourite with the family at the Haggs His exuberance, his gaiety, his powers of mimicry, his resourcefulness at all indoor games, his readiness to help the overworked mother of this big family in the most menial

household chores, made him a great favourite with all Mrs Chambers, who was always so concerned about his health, paid him the compliment of saying that she would like to be next to Bert in heaven And after he had spent a day in the fields helping with the harvest, Mr Chambers exclaimed " Work goes like fun when Bert's there it's no trouble at all to keep them going " Unfortunately this affection for Lawrence met with no reciprocation when Jessie visited his home in Eastwood his mother was plainly hostile to the girl, and her jealousy was one of the causes of the early shattering of their youthful idyll

Mrs Lawrence was the wife of an almost illiterate miner, and was of superior birth and education to her husband indeed, for a time she had been a schoolteacher There were five children, of whom Bert was the last but one They lived in great poverty, and the parents were constantly at loggerheads, due principally to the mother's determination to segregate them from their father's influence and background she was determined that none of her three sons should go down into the pits Jessie has described Mrs Lawrence as a bright vivacious little woman, full of vitality, amusingly racy and emphatic in her way of speaking, and completely conscious of her own rightness in everything Although she was mainly interested in her sons, all her children adored her, and she ruled over them by a sort of divine right of motherhood in such contrast to the 'poor disinherited father', who seemed

to have no part in the family life, and was driven night after night to find his consolation in the pubs It may have been the conflict between the parents as well as the devotion between mother and son which caused the tension and under-current of hostility which Jessie always sensed in the Lawrences' home, and which often unnerved her and at times made her feel quite sick It is also certain that after the second son Ern's sudden and tragic death in London, Mrs Lawrence concentrated all her devotion on Bert, and became increasingly jealous of the attention he was paying Jessie and of his frequent visits to the Haggs

One Easter, when Jessie was nineteen and Lawrence a year older, a conversation took place between them which they have both described, and which introduced a note of discord into their hitherto harmonious relationship Lawrence who, as Jessie was by now painfully aware, was completely subservient to his mother, told her that his people were worried over their relationship, and thought they should either get engaged or give it up He then added these shattering words "I've looked into my heart and I cannot find that I love you as a husband should love his wife" But he offered to become engaged to her if she on her part felt she loved him sufficiently Jessie has described the fierce blinding pain of mind and body that struck her on hearing these words When she had recovered sufficiently to be able to speak she replied that she had not yet thought consciously about love, but that she could

not consent to get engaged under such humiliating circumstances furthermore, the denial of love in advance took for her all meaning out of their friendship She was for breaking it off completely and at once But this Lawrence would not hear of they had too much in common, and he knew that he could not surrender the joy of visiting the Haggs, nor the mental and spiritual nourishment he drew from the companionship of Jessie So the friendship continued, but a note of discord had been introduced

Jessie has emphasised that, after this climactic conversation, things were never quite the same between them Like any other sensitive girl who has suffered a rebuff, she had to be on her guard and felt compelled to repress her vital feelings for the brilliant and volatile young man whom at heart she loved so deeply Meanwhile Lawrence suffered from increasing frustration at the seeming coldness of the attractive young woman whom he loved so passionately on the mental and spiritual level, but whom he seemed to be unable even to kiss It was a cruel dilemma for both of them, and there is not the slightest doubt that at this period the physical and spiritual side of Lawrence's nature became involved in a dichotomy which was to leave him scarred for the rest of his life He began to overemphasise the importance of sex, to make wild proposals to Jessie that she should remain his spiritual bride while he sought elsewhere for a woman he could embrace and make the mother of his children, and to

show all the symptoms of a person who is suffering from a severe conflict And later in life he spoke contemptuously of those who suffered from "sex in the head"

None the less it is a tribute to the depth of their friendship that it endured for a further five years after the Easter conversation, in spite of the continual jealousy and hostility of Mrs Lawrence In the meantime Lawrence had to leave Eastwood in order to take up his first teaching post at Croydon Jessie has described the affecting parting that took place between them at the farm gate a night or two before he left She burst into tears and he took her in his arms and kissed and comforted her Next day she called at his house to bid him a final farewell, but came away feeling deeply humiliated as she nearly always did when she went to his home

For some time now he had been writing prose and poetry, and submitting his efforts to Jessie for her criticism and appreciation She read the first draft of *Nethermere*, which ultimately became *The White Peacock*, which she thought, apart from the setting, was 'sentimental, story-bookish and unreal' Later, when it was published, the author paid her the neat compliment of writing, 'I its creator—you its nurse' And one lovely June day she copied out some of his poems and sent them to Hueffer, Editor of *The English Review* They were accepted Towards the end of his life Lawrence wrote her the following graceful tribute,

'The girl had launched me, so easily, on my literary career, like a princess cutting a thread, launching a ship' When the first draft of *Sons and Lovers* was submitted to Jessie, she criticised it as extremely 'tired' writing, said the autobiographical and fictional parts were ill-woven, and suggested that he re-wrote it, keeping closer to the reality and events of his life and home background This he at once agreed to do, and asked Jessie to write out for him an account of their early outings and association when they had been so happy together This she had started to do when he became ill with the pneumonia which terminated his teaching career

Unfortunately, during the time he was at Croydon their relations in other respects were less happy Twice Lawrence, driven by the spur of sex, became engaged to other women, breaking the news or introducing them to Jessie with the brutal frankness and callous cruelty of the complete egotist Once he became secretly engaged to Jessie, in spite of his mother's ban, sending her a poem and writing a letter saying that he now realised he had loved her all along But he broke this off a few months later, just before his mother's fatal illness It was the death of his mother and the final writing of *Sons and Lovers* which put an end to their long and in many ways unique friendship—a friendship which had survived the repeated assaults made on it by Lawrence's mother, who all the time had realised instinctively that Jessie had something to give

her son which her essentially commonplace mind could never supply

Jessie said that Lawrence was like a man distraught during his mother's long and painful illness, and that even the most disinterested love and affection could not reach or console him He returned home from Croydon on alternate weekends to be with her, and was with her when she died The day before the funeral the pair went for a walk together and discussed in anguish of spirit the old problem of their relationship It was during this conversation that Lawrence told Jessie he had always loved his mother like a lover and that was why he could never love her He then gave her the manuscript of three poems he had just written to his dead parent

He began the final draft of *Sons and Lovers* at Eastwood soon after the termination of his teaching career The first draft had been written at Croydon after his mother's death at the end of 1910 Jessie said that one of its themes was the mother's opposition to Paul's love for the character called Miriam She added that one of her reasons for advising him to stick closer to the facts of his family life was the hope that in doing so he might resolve the clash between Mrs Morel and Miriam on the spiritual plane where alone it could be worked out, with the result that he might break free from the mother obsession which still bound him, and walk out into psychological freedom She realised of course that it would be necessary to deal with the

subject impartially and with the greatest integrity but she had great faith in Lawrence's fundamental integrity

She has described her delight at the early part of the book, which dealt with the home life of the Morel family But as the manuscripts containing the Miriam part of the story began to arrive, she became more and more perturbed Those who have unconsciously sat for their portraits in the works of famous novelists have generally proved themselves to be extremely touchy as to the results It is therefore not surprising that a girl who had been emotionally involved with the author of *Sons and Lovers* for ten years should have had her own very definitive views as to what he ought to think of her and the nature of their relationship She complained that he had wilfully distorted the character of Miriam, heaping on her head every unattractive quality, in order to justify Mrs Morel's hatred of her Writing to her friend, Helen Corke, who was a teacher at Lawrence's Croydon school, she says, ' The "Miriam" part of the novel is a slander—a fearful treachery I think the story would be painful even to a stranger At the end one feels no further—only shocked and dismayed at the tragedy and brutality of it all Don't talk about it, please If I am to live at all it will be necessary to put David out of my life—to ignore him entirely, in thought and speech ' Perhaps the worst part of the betrayal in her eyes was the brutalisation of the love theme in the book, where he seemed to be trampling on the deepest spiritual values of her life

It was, indeed, bitter Once again, in art as in life, she had to accept the role of humiliation and defeat, while the bays of victory for a second time crowned the mother's brow Later, when in a sort of refinement of cruelty, Lawrence sent her the proofsheets of the novel to read, her distress became even more pronounced ' I can't think why David wished me to read them, since nothing can now be altered All this turmoil of emotion makes me fearfully sick—I can neither eat nor sleep, and sit in front of the fire shivering as if I had ague Indeed after reading that accursed writing I am as flabby as even David could wish to portray me If he doesn't soon let me alone he'll be the death of me ' And the whole tragedy was made more poignant by the consequent shattering of her belief in Lawrence's fundamental integrity, both as an artist and a man She saw him now as an alien and a philistine, subservient still to his dead mother's will, who had betrayed all she stood for, and mocked at the very meaning of the word love It was almost a mortal blow, and it is doubtful if Jessie ever completely recovered from its effects She complained that she felt as if she had suffered some terrible inner injury and had the greatest difficulty in avoiding a collapse Writing about it eighteen years later to her sister May in Canada she says ' I must tell you in all seriousness and sincerity that, but for divine help, I could not have come through unmaimed For I was really stricken unto death, and I had to fight for my life '

Indeed, if some of her remarks, written in anguish of spirit, show that she was confusing art with life, and do scant justice to the remarkable qualities of the novel, they certainly point very plainly to Lawrence's limitations as a novelist Fairness, balance, artistic detachment, the ability to see all round his problem or anyone's point of view but his own, are not qualities that are to be found in his books In urging him to re-write the book for the reasons she did, she had plainly credited him with powers he did not possess She handed him back the manuscript in silence on almost the last time they met, with her remarks written between the lines and on several attached loose sheets Her feelings ran too deep for words—they both knew it was the end of their long and in many ways wonderful friendship But the passing of Lawrence out of her life made her wish for some time quite definitely that she was dead However, she recovered sufficiently to be able to marry a schoolmaster three years later She died in 1944, fourteen years after her friend

But the story is not quite finished On the day of his death in 1930, although she had had no communication with him for eighteen years, and did not know he was ill, she plainly *saw* him, and the room in which she was working became filled with his presence, giving her a sense of unspeakable joy, and she heard him say " Can you only remember the pain and none of the joy? " Next morning she read of his death in the papers, and it came as a great shock

Writing again to her friend Helen Corke she passes her mature and considered judgement on her old sweetheart, both as a writer and a man ‘I see from the papers that D H L has finished his earthly course It was a great shock to me because I did not know he was ill I feel for him as deeply as in the old days, and if you know anything of him you would care to pass on, I shall be glad to hear of it My impression is that he suffered deeply and blindly at the hands of life It is strange to think he no longer sees the sunshine and the great clouds upon the skies of March Let us hope his angry spirit has found peace, which I think it did not find on earth ’

In a later letter, with a clear-sighted logic, she makes some critical comments in the light of the religious and spiritual values she had clung to all her life ‘As an artist, when he is dealing with the immediate and concrete, he is superb, but when he essays to be a thinker I find him superficial and unconvincing, and quite soon boring His concern was to find some means of escape from that narrow prison of his own ego, and to do that he was prepared to assault the cosmos So, whenever I read his almost delirious denunciations of what he pretended to regard as Christianity, I can only see the caged panther lashing himself into a fury to find some way out of his strait prison D H L was a man in bondage, and all his theorising and philosophisings only bear witness to his agony ’

She believed that he was driven out into a wilderness of egotism principally by his denial of the validity of any spiritual values, and the fact that he regarded himself as being exempt from the laws which bind mankind together Moreover, as he sought only for the animal in the human female, his inner consciousness became a ‘ terrible battleground where his two selves were constantly fighting each other ’ But she believed that he broke out of his prison before the end and became a free spirit, though by then he had expended his vital force ‘ The suffering of self-division to its utmost limit was a lifetime's work, maybe The story of the unification lies in the future ’

But, like Lawrence, who two years earlier had written to her younger brother David that touching letter of love and affection for the family at the Haggs—a letter that was not shown to Jessie until after his death—so her mood changes when she contemplates those golden days of her youth at the farm, in the company of the young genius for whom she had conceived such an abiding attachment Perhaps it was the only time in their lives that these two passionate and sensitive spirits, so alike in many ways, were ever completely happy ‘ In our home his name was a synonym for joy—radiant joy in simply being alive He communicated that joy to all of us, and made us even happy with one another no small achievement in a family like ours ! ’ She remembers how with all wild things, a rabbit caught in a snare, flowers and birds, the

speckled eggs in a nest, he was in primal sympathy—'a living vibration passed between him and them so that I always saw him, in the strictest sense of the word, immortal' And she concludes, 'Poor D H L—and yet how wonderful he was! It is good to know that such a spirit can take human form if it falls short of the glory of God, well, that is in God's hands too He has helped me to extend enormously the territory of life and that is a god-like thing to do' It was a just and generous tribute from the gifted woman who had gained so much and suffered so deeply at his hands

J A B

1960

Note
to the first edition

The author of this book is referred to by D H Lawrence in his *Autobiographical Sketch* as 'the girl who had been the chief friend of my youth' Very gracefully he acknowledges his indebtedness to her by saying that she launched him on his literary career 'like a princess cutting a thread, launching a ship' At a much earlier date he had created the fictitious Miriam on the basis of their relationship, and an account of the circumstances which gave rise to *Sons and Lovers* are to be found in the following pages 'E T' has here set down her recollections of this early friendship, and the story has involved a vivid and detailed picture of Lawrence's life during the formative years of adolescence and early manhood The portrait is unique, as was the intimate knowledge of Lawrence at the time, and many important details of his upbringing and education are here given which but for this personal record must have remained unknown The narrative is of an early friendship, in many ways idyllic, which suffered shipwreck for reasons beyond the control of the protagonists Its value lies not only in the convincing portrait of the youthful Lawrence but in the sincerity, reticence and imaginative understanding implicit in the telling

M P
1935

I

FAMILY LIFE

My first clear recollection of D H Lawrence goes back to the Congregational Sunday School at Eastwood which we both attended On a Sunday afternoon in each month the superintendent used to organize recitations instead of the usual lessons We were sitting in groups, each with a teacher, the boys on one side of the long room, the girls on the other The little dais at the end where the superintendent stood seemed far away, and the poems were seldom worth listening to, so that when a slight, fair boy of about eleven mounted the platform, my attention was only attracted when it became evident that he could not remember the beginning of his poem He stood nervous and alert, the perfect pattern of a scholarship boy, and whispers went round that it was 'Bert Lawrence' His elder sister E was sitting near the platform, giggling at his distress He opened his lips several times, only to find that the words would not come The room grew ominously still The white-haired, rosy-cheeked superintendent smiled encouragement, and Lawrence's sister giggled hysterically At last the boy turned a tortured face to the superintendent and made a request, which was granted by a cordial nod Lawrence thereupon drew a sheet of note-paper from

the inside pocket of his coat, glanced at it, then recited the poem correctly, and got down from the platform with a white face

In all probability I should never have become acquainted with Lawrence but that his mother and mine struck up a sudden friendship one Sunday evening after chapel They found themselves together in the porch, glanced at one another, smiled, and walked out side by side My mother was more of a stranger to the mining country than Mrs Lawrence, having lived there only some five or six years to Mrs Lawrence's twenty A mysterious affinity drew them together, and they had a heart to heart talk At least Mrs Lawrence told my mother all her family troubles I have a dim recollection of mother being very late home from chapel, and on going to look for her in the lane, seeing the two small figures dressed in black, and Mrs Lawrence talking with animation

My grandparents had been staunch chapel people all their lives, and their pew in the Congregational chapel was in the same aisle as the Lawrences', only across the gangway Old-fashioned Eastwood people, however, did not speak of the Congregational chapel but referred to it as 'Butty's Lump' The promoters of the scheme for building the new chapel were influential at the colliery, and the surest means of securing a good 'stall' in the pit was to make a handsome donation to the building fund Perhaps that explains why our chapel had its air of elegance, so rare

in nonconformist chapels The Sunday School consisted of the gloomy rooms of the British School where Lawrence served his apprenticeship as a pupil-teacher

Mr Remington 'with his round white beard and his ferocity', was my teacher as he was Lawrence's, though we were not in the class at the same time The old man would stand in front of us, clapping his hands to the tune and singing with us

> Sound the battle cry
> See the foe is nigh
> Raise the standard high
> For the Lord,

his old voice making a harsh dissonance with our shrill young ones Instructing us in Sabbath observance Mr Remington said he always 'shulled' the peas on Saturday night

The charming young Welshman who was the minister at that time was a great friend of our family He and father used to have long and animated discussions about the authenticity of the Bible The minister offended mother when he said in his bright way that the story of the Garden of Eden was just a beautiful fairy-tale to explain the beginnings of life on earth to simple people Mother protested with warmth

'If you will doubt one part of the Bible you will doubt all', and thereafter went to bed, leaving the men to discuss the Bible until the small hours

At that time father was an active member of the Christian Endeavour class and would sometimes stay up until two in the morning preparing a paper when it was his turn to give an address He always tried to make it homely and drew his illustrations from incidents within his own experience He would talk about it for days beforehand, explaining the various points to mother, and we children in the bedroom above the kitchen used to hear him earnestly rehearsing his prayer Mother was sceptical about all this She would have liked father to see life steadily and see it whole But father was not built that way Life for him was a patchwork

It was about this time that father read *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* to mother from the *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, in which it appeared as a serial story I was aware of the thrill of anticipation on Saturday afternoons, but I could not understand why he should be reading the newspaper aloud for such a long time (for we youngsters were not allowed to speak while father was reading to mother), nor why mother was flushed and excited, and kept making little exclamations of surprise and dismay I would stand on a low stool behind father's armchair to see how much more he had to read, but could make nothing of the dull-looking columns of print

We were not directly acquainted with the Lawrence children in those days but I heard their names

mentioned from time to time Father had seen E trespassing in our mowing grass and came home very angry

'That eldest lass of Lawrence's is brazen soft,' he said to mother 'When I shouted to her to get out she just stood and sauced me I s'll tell her mother'

Ernest Lawrence was already a legendary figure He had a post in a shipping office in London, we understood, and earned a handsome salary He it was who kept his mother supplied with the good quality gloves and boots that had attracted my mother's attention when she had first noticed Mrs Lawrence in the procession of colliers' wives that used to stream past our cottage on Friday afternoons, on their way to the colliery offices to draw the men's pay He was quite the fairy prince of the family, but a chance remark of father's stuck in my mind

'I never see such a young fool in my life as that lad of Lawrence's, Ernest, do they call him There I met him walking down the street in a top hat, frock coat, and yellow kid gloves'

I heard the irony in mother's laugh

'How weak-minded,' she said

On the one occasion when I saw Lawrence's father in those early days I had a momentary impression of richness and warmth, both of colouring and voice He seemed to be a man of medium height with ruddy cheeks and black hair and whiskers I have been told that as a young man he was fine looking, and wore a

handsome black beard He was also a first-rate workman, and was invariably called upon when there was a particularly difficult job to be done in the pit The story goes that once when he was having his hair cut, the barber left him after doing one side, and turned to shave a customer who was waiting with chin lathered, whereupon Mr Lawrence got up in a huff and went off to another barber

I was eleven when we left the cottage my father always referred to as 'the old hom'stead', and went to live at the little farm some three miles farther into the country The farm was about a mile from the nearest village, and even the cart road ended at our yard-gate The house was long, and the line of the roof was broken by a gable window which matched the porch over the front door The farm buildings adjoined the house and formed one side of a square The front garden lay snugly in the angle between the house and our neighbour's high yard-wall and buildings From the front door we looked down the length of garden which was fenced off from the crew-yard, over a croft and into the wood that shut us in completely on the west The big yard-gate and the two small gates into the garden were painted cream, 'Queen Anne's White' the estate painters called it, to match the cream of the window frames At the back of the house was a big garden divided from the stackyard by railings, containing two fine cherry trees with a low spreading

apple tree between them, several plum trees, and currant and gooseberry bushes Beyond was a rough grass plot with an apple tree in the centre and clumps of daffodils in the hedgebottom

From the stackyard the land dipped to the valley where we could see in the hollow the red roofs of Felley Mill, and away on the right Moorgreen reservoir gleaming like tarnished silver In the valley bottom the two brooks that drained the mill-pond into the reservoir ran over the road and were crossed by stepping stones, while the shaggy expanse of the Annesley Hills, dotted with patches of woodland, rose steeply behind Further to the right, High Park wood covered the hills above the lake, and among the trees we could see the little tower of the shooting lodge which Lawrence was to make the scene of his first novel Our orchard was an irregular triangle cut out of the wood, and across the width of two fields was a nursery of young firs and spruce trees we called the Warren We had a right of way through the Warren and across the meadow which brought us to the high road just above the reservoir, and this was the path Lawrence usually took when he came to see us

There was talk of Mrs Lawrence paying us a visit when first we went to live at the farm, but we had been there three years before she came Eventually father told Lawrence how to find the field path and the way through the Warren, and so bring his mother by the short cut It was on a day in early summer when the

small, vigorous woman, and the slender boy she called Bertie, came into the farmyard, so still in the afternoon sunshine Mother went out to greet them, and as she took them into the parlour, Mrs Lawrence, complaining of the heat, said in her crisp way

'I'm thankful you haven't got a fire in here '

We sat down to an early tea before the rest of the family came in I had to go into the kitchen to boil eggs, and was surprised when the tall, fair boy followed me, and stood silently looking about him in a curious, intent way The new staircase that had been put in for us made a big bulge on one wall, with deep recesses at either end The recess beside the fireplace had a little window looking into the back garden Lawrence seemed to be taking everything in with his eyes It made me feel uncomfortable to see the peculiarities of our kitchen subjected to such keen scrutiny

When tea was over we went out of doors Mrs Lawrence and mother moved away together, talking the incomprehensible talk of adults Already I felt that Mrs Lawrence pitied mother on account of her big family, and for living in such a queer, out-of-the-way spot There was a tinge of patronage in her voice

Lawrence and I went into the field beyond the stackyard He stood quite still there, as if fascinated with the view of the Annesley Hills and High Park wood, with the reservoir gleaming below

The single point of interest he had for me lay in the fact that he was still a schoolboy, as his Eton coat and collar reminded me My own schooling, which had been of the crudest, had finished six months before, and my lack of education was a bitter humiliation to me I was aware that this rather aloof youth had been for some years at the High School, and that he had studied French and German I fancied that his superior education enabled him to appreciate things which were inaccessible to me It was with a sense of getting even with him that I asked him abruptly how old he was

'Fifteen,' he replied with a quick glance

'I thought so I'm fourteen,' I responded, aware that my question had been uncivil

'You go to school?' I continued

'Yes, to the High,' he answered, and gave me no further information

'I don't care for the name of Bertie,' I went on, with a vague feeling of hostility 'It's a girlish name Do they call you Bertie at school?'

'No, of course not They call me Lawrence '

'That's nicer, I think I'd rather call you Lawrence '

'Do call me Lawrence,' he replied quickly, 'I'd like it better '

He was shy and withdrawn, as if taking in many impressions at once I felt that I was lacking in courtesy towards him, but I was terribly afraid this High School boy might look down on me

Merely to prove my independence I set out a little

later to visit a friend who lived on the opposite side of the wood At the door I ran into Lawrence His penetrating glance went over my hat, my face, my cloak

'Are you going out?' he asked, disapproval in his voice He had been exploring the farm with my brothers and his face glowed with excitement He was naturally pale, but the keenness of his glance and his swiftly changing expression made him seem vivid I told him where I was going, and he asked excitedly

'How do you get there? Which way do you go?'

'Through the wood,' I replied

'You go through there?' he said eagerly, nodding towards the wood

When I returned everybody was crowded in the kitchen and the conversation had turned upon books My parents adored Barrie, *The Little Minister* and *A Window in Thrums* The talk was lively and Mrs Lawrence seemed to be the pivot upon which the liveliness centred She struck me as a bright, vivacious little woman, full of vitality, and amusingly emphatic in her way of speaking Her face changed rapidly as she talked and she had a habit of driving home her views with vigorous shakes of the head She took a keen interest in things around her As she said of herself, she entered into her children's pursuits and kept young through them The conversation was mainly between Mrs Lawrence, father, and my elder sister, with Lawrence joining in occasionally I listened for awhile

in silence, then ventured to mention my favourite author

'Who likes Scott?' I asked

'*I* do,' Mrs Lawrence replied, beaming encouragement upon me

After this visit Lawrence came to the farm nearly always on his mid-week half-holiday He would step quietly into the kitchen, often bringing some magazine or other to our book-loving household He seemed gentle and reserved, and talked chiefly to my father, who liked him He was rather slow at making friends with my brothers, and we on our side were shy of him, and afraid lest he should give himself airs I have no particular recollection of Lawrence during that first summer except as a quiet presence coming suddenly out of the sunshine into the kitchen, warm with the fragrance of baking bread Father and he seemed to find a good deal in common, and I noticed from the first that father talked to him almost as if he were grown up I remember hearing them discuss whether it was possible to store electricity, and father spoke as if he expected Lawrence to know all about it Occasionally he would bring a copy of *Black and White* and they would talk about the illustrations, and I heard Lawrence describe the method of reproduction These discussions introduced an interesting variety into our somewhat uneventful days

Lawrence's schooldays finished that summer and he became a clerk in a Nottingham warehouse We saw

rather less of him then, but I heard him tell mother, in a voice that was clearly an unconscious imitation of his mother's, how Ernest and his fiancée had spent a fortnight's holiday with them, and that it had proved something of a strain In October Ernest paid a flying visit to Goose Fair, and the next week we heard that he was dangerously ill in London and his parents had been summoned to his bedside Almost immediately afterwards came news of his death, and we felt stunned by the tragedy His mother had him brought home and buried in the cemetery at New Eastwood She told my mother later, that when she reached her son's bedside she could scarcely recognize him, his head and face were so swollen and inflamed He had returned to London in the raw morning hours after an exhausting week-end, and she could only think that he had caught a chill which brought on the fatal erysipelas Telling me about this tragic journey years later she said

'Yes, and I had to do everything myself, find out about the trains and how to get to Ernest's lodgings His father was with me but he was no help, he stood just as if he was dazed '

Only a few weeks after Ernest's death father came home from the milk-round with more bad news It was Bertie this time, down with pneumonia Mother looked stricken

'I don't know whatever Mrs Lawrence will do if that son's taken from her,' she said 'She told me when she was here with him that however much she loved

Ernest it was nothing to what she felt for the one she brought with her He had always meant more to her than any of the others '

The trouble in the Lawrence family cast a gloom over our household, and mother inquired anxiously every day for news It seemed a long time before father brought word that the patient was out of danger His mother's nursing had saved his life, was the general verdict When he was convalescent he began to send messages by father, begging one of us to go and see him My sister took him a bunch of snowdrops that grew beneath the parlour window She told us how gay he was, and how keenly he was looking forward to coming to The Haggs again, as soon as he was strong enough His mother said he had grown so much in bed, she was sure his suits would all be too short for him

On a day in early spring father brought him along in the milk-float Mother and I watched from the kitchen window as the tall, thin youth in a dark overcoat stepped down from the float and walked slowly up the garden path

'How white he is, how thin, poor lad,' mother was saying He came into the kitchen, frail but eager, delighted to be with us again Father seemed equally delighted I do not know why my parents loved Lawrence as they did, but they were as glad at his recovery as if he had been their own son They told him he was to come up just when he liked

'Come up through the Warren, Bert,' father said 'You want to get the smell o' them pine trees into your lungs They're reckoned to be good for weak chests, aren't they? Take deep breaths and get your lungs full of the scent '

From then his visits were a matter of course, and he became almost one of the family He told us rather shamefacedly that his mother said he might as well pack his things and come and live with us In later years he said that in those days he was only happy when he was either at The Haggs or on the way there He vastly enjoyed the freedom of his long convalescence, and spent a month at Skegness with an aunt who kept a 'select' boarding-house on the front He sent long descriptive letters to the family in general, in one of which he said that he could stand in his aunt's drawing-room and watch the tide rolling in through the window My sister wrote back at once and said what an uncomfortable drawing-room his aunt's must be, with the tide rolling in through the window! He came home quite strong, and I heard father say what a rare good lad Bert was to his mother He would blacklead the grate and scrub the floor Lawrence told me himself that he never minded father seeing him with a coarse apron tied round his waist, but if he heard my brother's step in the entry he whipped it off on the instant, fearing he would despise him for doing housework

At that period I was in a state of furious discontent and rebellion I was the family drudge and hated it

My lack of education was a constant humiliation The desire for knowledge and a longing for beauty tortured me I came to the conclusion that unless I could achieve some degree of education I had better never have been born I quarrelled continually with my brothers, who tried to order me about I felt an Ishmael, with my hand against everybody, and everybody's hand against me I did not know that Lawrence was aware of my state of mind, but one day he suddenly took an end of chalk from his pocket and wrote on the stable door

Nil desperandum

'What does it mean?' I asked, although I knew

'Never despair,' he replied, with an enigmatic smile, and ran away

Eventually I succeeded in making myself so disagreeable that mother in desperation sent me back to school and I became a pupil-teacher Then began an arduous life of studying, teaching, and helping with the housework, which still somehow left time for the most exciting games

It was by now an established rule that Lawrence should come to tea on a Saturday, and when he entered the house he brought a holiday atmosphere with him It was not merely that we were all nice with him, he knew how to make us nicer to one another Even my eldest brother thawed when Lawrence was there He brought a pack of cards, and taught us whist, and we played fast and furious, with the younger children

crowding round to watch, and Lawrence excitedly scolding and correcting us When he was in the mood he could be very funny, particularly when mimicking the members of the Christian Endeavour class repeating in turn 'The servant of the Lord is like a well-filled house ' He used to say that our laughter was Homeric He would have us dance in our little kitchen, and once while we paused for breath he said

'Father says one ought to be able to dance on a threepenny bit '

He seldom spoke of his father and we at once exclaimed

'Why, does your father dance?'

'He used to, when he was a young man He ran a dancing class at one time,' he replied briefly

It seemed unbelievable, we had never thought of his father in that light

Lawrence was extraordinarily kind and willing to help with whatever task was afoot He was most considerate towards mother, with her big, unruly family, so hard to manage, each of us at a different stage of development, each making a different demand upon her Several times when he came in and found her with more to do than she could get through he fetched water for the boiler, tidied up the hearth, and made a fire in the parlour where my sister (who was also a pupil-teacher) and I did our lessons And I well remember a basket of tiny pickling onions that stood on the stone slab outside the back door for weeks, waiting to be peeled

They suddenly disappeared, and mother said that Bert had peeled them, he just sat down and did them without saying a word to anyone No task seemed dull or monotonous to him He brought such vitality to the doing that he transformed it into something creative

It was the same at harvest time Lawrence would spend whole days working with my father and brothers in the fields at Greasley These fields lay four miles away, and we used to pack a big basket of provisions to last all day, so that hay harvest had a picnic flavour Father enjoyed Lawrence's company quite as much as the rest of us There was for years a fine understanding between them, a sympathy and recognition of what was best in each other I heard father say to mother

'Work goes like fun when Bert's there, it's no trouble at all to keep them going '

It was true, in those early days Lawrence seemed so happy that merely to be alive and walking about was an adventure, and his gift for creating an atmosphere of good fellowship made work a joy One could not help being affected by his vitality and charm Mother made a remark that set me speculating She said

'I should like to be next to Bert in heaven '

I did hope heaven wouldn't turn out to be a sort of eternal Sunday school Our ideas of heaven must have been remarkably concrete, for Mrs Lawrence told mother that she looked forward more to meeting her son Ernest in heaven than Jesus Christ Himself

Lawrence's speech abounded in vivid and oddly

characteristic turns I remember hearing him say in his blithe way

'Ah, there's a custard for dinner, it rejoiceth my heart to see ' If he wanted a small piece of cake he would say in his rather high-pitched voice, 'Only give me a smeggin ' Anything he didn't like was 'a measly thing' and an inferior thing 'wasn't a patch' on something else He amused us mightily by showing us how a girl acquaintance laughed He would open his mouth wide and emit a sudden explosive giggle that was so comically like the original we laughed to exhaustion He told us the story of his father bringing home a whole ham and then stopping payment for it each week out of the housekeeping money

'Mother carried on about it week after week,' said Lawrence, with a touch of pained recollection in his voice 'At last father could stand it no longer, and when mother began again he turned and looked at her, "Woman, how'd tha feeace" he said, and I nearly felt sorry for him '

We laughed uproariously, and Lawrence laughed too, a little ruefully

'And did she stop then?' we asked

'Oh, yes,' he said, 'even mother had to laugh '

I had been a pupil-teacher fifteen months before I received my first wages — five golden sovereigns To celebrate the occasion I invited Lawrence to tea, and he agreed to come on a school day It was sultry July weather and when I came home mother had laid tea

at one end of the long parlour-table Lawrence had not arrived, and we thought he might have one of the bad headaches to which he was subject just then He told us that when he had a headache he was usually flushed and people would tell him how well he was looking, and he never contradicted them At last we saw his dark slim figure emerging from the Warren, and he came in looking pale and tired, for like myself he had spent the day in school We had tea in the cool parlour, mother, the two small children, Lawrence and myself, the rest of the family being away in the hay fields

It was my eldest brother's twenty-first birthday and Lawrence seemed to yearn for his friendship He had brought presents — a picture 'Colt-hunting in the New Forest', from himself, and a necktie, accompanied by a note of platitudinous greeting, from his mother We admired the presents, and I noticed Lawrence's half-apologetic gesture as he handed the note to my mother, and her faint irony, like a mental grimace, on reading it

After tea we went into the wood I particularly wanted to show him a colony of tall foxgloves I had come across The wood held a fascination for us The shade the murmur of the trees, the sense of adventure, the strong odour of the undergrowth, the sudden startled call of a pheasant, the whirr of a partridge's wings, were thrilling things The gamekeepers must often have seen us, but we never saw them, and in all our wanderings about the wood no gamekeeper ever

made himself visible to us The flowers in their seasons were exciting events, first, anemones while the trees were still bare and cold, their pale flowers nearly hidden in their green frills, then celandines, and purple unscented violets in the lush grass of the ridings, and later the paths misty with forget-me-nots, and the miracle of the bluebells that made a blue carpet under the trees and filled the air with an intoxicating odour We used to gather armfuls that lay heavy like sheaves of corn, only for their waxen coldness and penetrating fragrance There seemed no flower nor even weed whose name and qualities Lawrence did not know At first I was sceptical of his knowledge

'How do you know what it is?' I asked him

'I *do* know,' he replied

'But *how* do you know? You may be wrong,' I persisted

'I know *because* I know How dare you ask me how I know,' he answered with heat

I led him to where the foxgloves stood, like Red Indian braves, I said He gave them that intense glance I was now so accustomed to I scarcely noticed it, and said nothing, and I thought he disliked my simile

For a long time I was reluctant to go to his home, and Lawrence said reproachfully

'I know why you won't come, it's because of father'

I hastened to reassure him, but indeed I had heard



JESSIE CHAMBERS IN 1906

that his father sometimes got drunk, and in my childhood a drunken man had been a thing of terror

'There's nothing for you to be afraid of,' Lawrence went on 'You'd never see him, he's hardly ever in '

And so I found it to be One rarely saw Lawrence's father When he had washed and changed into his 'shifting' clothes he went out to join his cronies in the public-house

The family was living then in what Lawrence called 'Bleak House', because it stood so open to the winds They had a wide view over the houses in the valley to the meadows beyond, and to where High Park wood began Lawrence has told me how he used to watch the cloud shadows stalking across the fields

I did not go to the Lawrences' house many times before I became aware of a curious atmosphere such as I had never known before There seemed to be a tightness in the air, as if something unusual might happen at any minute It was somehow exciting, yet it made me feel a little sick I thought for a long time that it was the memory of Ernest's tragic death, and of the mother's heroic fight for the life of her younger son, that was the cause of the strung-up feeling in their household It was not due specifically to anything that was said or done, although happenings there had sharp edges and a dramatic quality that made them stand out in one's memory It was a constant quality, something one felt immediately on entering the house I liked to go, just to feel, as it were, or to listen to the curious,

powerful vibration, so different from our house, or any house I have ever known Perhaps it was the strong emotional tension between mother and son, and in a directly contrary sense, between husband and wife, and father and son, that made the strangely vibrating atmosphere

Mrs Lawrence, though small, was an arresting figure with shrewd grey eyes in a pale face, and light-coloured hair Her smallness was more than compensated for by her vigour and determination All her energy was expended upon her children, who adored her, she was such a contrast to the poor, disinherited father She was an excellent housewife and a kind neighbour to the motherless girls who lived near Her confidence in herself and her pronouncements upon people and things excited my wonder It was new to me to meet anyone so certain of herself and of her own rightness But she could be vivid in speech, gay and amusing, and in spite of a keen edge to her tongue, she was warm-hearted She said quite frankly that she was interested mainly in her sons My mother used to say that she was always sorry to have a girl-child, because of the difficulties inherent in a woman's life But Mrs Lawrence's attitude was something different

A curious feature of the Lawrence household was the way in which various girls would drift in casually, stay and talk a little, and then go as casually as they came Lawrence became a pupil-teacher about a year after his illness, and he would sit at the table doing his

lessons, not in the least put out by the conversation going on around him In those leisurely days we had the pleasant habit of going to meet one another, and if several of our family were going to the Lawrences' to tea, Bert would come to meet us, accompanied by several girls His mother used to smile and say there was safety in numbers Speaking of her eldest son who had been married some years, she said in her emphatic way

'Yes, and *he* was never going to leave me "I shall always stop with you, mother, and take care of you," he used to say And at seventeen he was arming a girl round '

Mrs Lawrence spoke with such comical emphasis we couldn't help laughing, but there was a thrust behind her words

Another time she said in a curious tone of half-comic, half-bitter reminiscence

'Ay, our Ern once heard E asking me if I was pretty when I was a girl "Were you pretty, our mother, when you were a girl?" she said And Ern turned on her "Pretty?" he said, "*Of course* she was pretty, a long sight prettier than you'll ever be, don't you worry " That was what our Ern said, "*Of course* she was pretty " '

Lawrence told us one winter that a flourishing pork-butcher in Eastwood wanted him to make out the bills in his shop from seven till nine on Friday evenings He was to get five shillings for the two hours, and he

felt he ought not to refuse There was a note of dread in his voice 'Oh, Bert, you'll smell of pork,' mother said My sister laughed and said she would come and look at him through the shop window It seemed shocking to me, and I said nothing Lawrence turned to me '*You* come and look at me,' he said 'You *will* come, won't you?' I saw him one evening, a strangely isolated figure in the busy shop, industriously keeping accounts It pained me to see him, and I was turning away in shame, when he suddenly caught sight of me, and instantly came out to speak to me He knew quite well how I felt 'If you can wait until nine I can walk home with you,' he said But I couldn't wait until nine Lawrence gave the job up soon afterwards

When Lawrence discovered that we had never seen the sea, he persuaded mother to let us go on a day trip to Skegness His own intense enjoyment gave a keener edge to our pleasure He knew all the landmarks on the way, and would not let us miss a single point of interest We had to rush to the carriage window to observe the graceful lines of Gedling Church spire rising sheer out of the valley Further on there was Bottesford Church with its handsome dog-toothed ornament, and we tried to descry the outline of Belvoir Castle standing high on its ridge At Boston we craned our necks to catch a glimpse of the famous Stump dominating the fens with its sombre dignity But it was more than merely *seeing* these landmarks, it

was a kind of immediate possession, as though to have missed seeing them would have been to lose an essential moment of life An outing with Lawrence was a memorable experience There was a sense of immediacy, each moment as it came seemed to be a culminating point of existence His face, and particularly his eyes, were alight with eagerness that we should miss nothing of what stirred his own delight so deeply

At the seaside we found a greyish day, and I saw that what mattered was not the colour of the sea, about which I had wondered so much, but the expanse, and the wide horizon, and the quite different quality of light We paddled, and dried our feet in the sand, and A called in her tone of conscious ownership to her brother to dry her feet for her He made a gesture of protest, but obeyed all the same, kneeling and dusting the sand from her feet with his handkerchief We ate our lunch on the beach, and after tea, which we had in a café, went to buy presents to take home As Lawrence was the only one of us who had tasted melon he bought one and we retired into an arbour in the public gardens to eat it He assured us it would be delicious, and cut it into half a dozen strips Mine tasted like turnip, and was quite as hard But that was a secondary consideration, we had eaten melon, it was an experience the more Lawrence had a knack of describing where he had been and what he had done in such a way as to make one feel that the thing he had seen was one of the few things in the world really worth seeing, and what he

had done was just what any vitally alive person would want to do But he was apologetic about the melon, the one he had tasted previously really had been delicious — this wasn't a patch on it, he assured us

When Goose Fair came round Lawrence wanted me to join a party for a jaunt round the Fair, but mother gave a blank refusal He sent me a postcard from the café where they had tea at a table in a window overlooking the whole panorama of the Fair, and he managed to convey the full flavour of his palpitating excitement When he got home he wrote a long account of what they had done, and headed the letter 'The Diary of a Butterfly to a Moth' I maliciously showed it to mother

'A butterfly to a moth?' she said 'What does he mean? Who is the moth? Are you the moth?' Her anger helped to mollify my disappointment

But we had some wonderful outings Mrs Lawrence was an active member of the Women's Co-operative Guild, and sometimes she and a friend would make up a party and hire a brake to take us to Matlock, and it was Lawrence who prevailed upon my parents to let my sister and me accompany them Best of all, though, were the tramps we had in parties of a dozen or so, all young people These were genuine explorations of the countryside, and Lawrence was always the originator and the leader He would walk briskly along with his lithe, light step, tirelessly observant, his eager eyes taking everything in, his pale skin whipped into

colour We had an exhilarating walk to Codnor Castle one bitterly cold day in a Christmas holiday, along the frozen black mud of the towing path by the canal, the icy wind whipping a finer ecstasy into our blood, and imparting a flavour that was more than mortal to the sandwiches and biscuits we munched as we went along The little, crumbling, ivy-covered ruin that Cromwell had demolished was full of the romance of bygone days We peopled it in imagination with its former inhabitants — ourselves more splendidly situated

There was a memorable outing when we took train to Alfreton and walked from there to Wingfield Manor, then on to Crich Stand, and through the woods to Whatstandwell where we hoped to get a train home, but found the station locked up We were tired and hungry, and beyond our train fare could muster only a few pence amongst us to buy bread and butter at a cottage But we were supremely happy Lawrence seemed to have a knowledge of the countryside as he had of flowers, he could tell us something about every place we passed through, as if he had already shared in its life

It was on one of these walks — we had been to the Hemlock Stone, the curious outcrop of ancient rock that stands alone like a sentinel on the very edge of a big industrial region — that I had a sudden flash of insight which made me see Lawrence in a totally new light We were walking along anyhow, singly, or in twos and threes I happened to be alone, admiring the

bronze tips of the maple in the hedge Suddenly I turned and saw Lawrence in the middle of the road, bending over an umbrella There was something in his attitude that arrested me His stooping figure had a look of intensity, almost of anguish For a moment I saw him as a symbolic figure I was deeply moved and walked back to him

'What is the matter?' I asked

'It was Ern's umbrella, and mother will be wild if I take it home broken,' he replied

We walked on together, but I did not tell him what I had seen This was perhaps the beginning of our awareness of sympathy for one another

Christmas was a wonderful time There were parties at one house or another during the holidays, and always thrilling charades at our house, with Lawrence directing things, and father joining in the play like one of us Then towards midnight, to escort our friends through the Warren and over the dim field path, singing, with the stars flashing above the silent woods, and the pale light over the water, was perhaps the most wonderful bit of all We seemed to be living in a world within a world, created out of the energy of the imagination Life in those days was full to the brim, pressed down, and running over

Lawrence was loath to admit that boyhood was over He was most reluctant to begin shaving, and was hurt

when people chaffed him about the pale hairs on his chin My sister criticized him severely He wasn't decent, she said, going about with such a hairy, untidy face But shaving was a sign of growing up Lawrence found the present so good, he wanted it to last

II

ADOLESCENTS

My first real step into life outside home came when the local education authority drafted the pupil-teachers of our district to the Ilkeston Pupil-teacher Centre At first we were housed in the schoolrooms of a Wesleyan chapel, and it was there that Lawrence received instruction both for the King's scholarship and the matriculation examinations Later on accommodation was found for us in some rooms over the Carnegie library near the church, and whenever I think of those rooms I smell again the strong odour of the new, pale yellow chairs and desks The two years of my attendance at the pupil-teacher Centre — I was seventeen when I started — stand out for me as the two most completely happy years of my life It was the acme of childlike completeness before the inevitable break-up out of which maturity, if it ever comes, must proceed

I knew quite well that the manner of our education was a beggarly makeshift, but for me it was wealth beyond price We went for only two and a half out of the five school days, having to teach in school on the other days But to sit down in a class and be taught, no matter how crudely, instead of struggling all day trying to teach children, or sitting alone at a table in the

middle of a noisy schoolroom 'studying', to mix with a number of girls of my own age and occupation, the long early morning walk to the railway station, and the novelty of the short journey by train, these things filled out the days with wonder and delight And when the mellow chimes of the church clock drifted across the market square to us in our classroom, I could not escape the feeling that in spite of the meanness of our situation, we were the heirs, and in a sense the fellows of the scholars of all time I laughed at myself for entertaining such far-fetched notions, but they refused to be driven away entirely I had longed so acutely for education — Lawrence used to say I suffered from what Carlyle called the Englishman's hell, the hell of not getting on But it was not that Right from infancy I had been aware of a world that glimmered beyond the surrounding world of fact, and I dreaded lest the circumstances of my life should shut me out, compel me to live, as it were, in the dark, and prevent me from ever becoming a sharer in the feast of the human spirit And here, in our pupil-teacher Centre, I felt was the beginning of a way

Lawrence's sister A and I were in the same class, but being a pupil-teacher in a Board school, A was no newcomer I was attached to a poverty-stricken National school, and was looked upon as coming from the backwoods, and I was not in the least surprised that at first A held aloof from me to see how I shaped I had known beforehand that this would be her attitude

So I made no approach to her, and when she saw I was finding my level quite independently she sought me out and we were good chums during our Centre days We used to travel together, and climb the long hill of Bath Street side by side, A usually carrying a school-bag bulging with books she would never require In class we read *The Tempest* together, looking over the same copy Miranda's noble speeches fired my spirit, and I murmured to A , 'That's just what I believe ' 'Humph, I think it's rubbish,' was her whispered rejoinder

Occasionally Lawrence attended Centre at the same time, though being our senior he normally went on other days I remember seeing him sitting apart at a table doing matriculation work He smiled across at me, and I saw again his uniqueness, how totally different he was from any of the other youths What this difference consisted in is difficult to put into words, though it was most palpable to the eyes There was his finely shaped head with small, well-set ears, and his look of concentration, of being more intensely alive There was his sensitiveness, too, his delicacy of spirit, that, while it contributed vitally to his charm, made him more vulnerable, more susceptible to injury from the crudeness of life His hair and skin were light and his build delicate He was proud of his small hands, extremely clever hands they were, equally deft at arranging sweet peas in a vase or at sowing the seed But there was another quality of lightness about him, something that seemed to shine from within He and I

were beginning to be aware of this difference, and it made a common ground between us We didn't speak of it, but it was there, a point of attraction

When we were alone we talked of many things we would never dream of mentioning if anyone else was present Religion was the first of such topics and I felt surprised when Lawrence began to talk so seriously Until then I had looked upon him as something of a scatter-brain

But that was in very early days Lawrence would only be sixteen when we first talked about religion, and he was clearly perplexed by what passed for religious life amongst us

'What does it *mean* to them?' he asked slowly, thinking hard 'Does it mean anything at all? I don't think it means much to me '

We each regarded our mothers as deeply religious women and in many talks we tried to find out what significance the religion they professed had for them It was the beginning of Lawrence's groping into experience to find a value that might serve as a guide There was little analysis of the elements of religion at this stage – that came later — but there was a serious attempt to find a practical value Lawrence talked a good deal about 'faith' and 'works' and seemed divided in his own mind as to which was the true expression of the religious life Our respective mothers were the standards of measurement and he finally summed up the argument by saying

'I suppose your mother's "Mary, Mary" — I'm afraid mine's "Martha, Martha" '

By the time of Centre days Lawrence was beginning to wonder about himself and to realize that he possessed outstanding intellectual gifts I remember very well a conversation when he and I happened to be on our way home together It was perhaps the first of many times when we talked about his uniqueness, though of course we never called it that

'When an individual has more of any quality than other people I think it ought to be shared, don't you?' he asked tentatively I agreed, and he continued

'When one has bigger mental gifts, for instance, I think they ought to be used to help other people That must be what they're given us for, don't you think so?'

After a pause he said slowly, feeling for his words

'Perhaps I shall be something some day, I mean a bit more than ordinary If ever I am, I should like to have a big house — you know there are some lovely old houses in the Park with gardens and terraces Wouldn't it be fine if we could live in one of those houses, mother and all the people we like together? Wouldn't it be fine!'

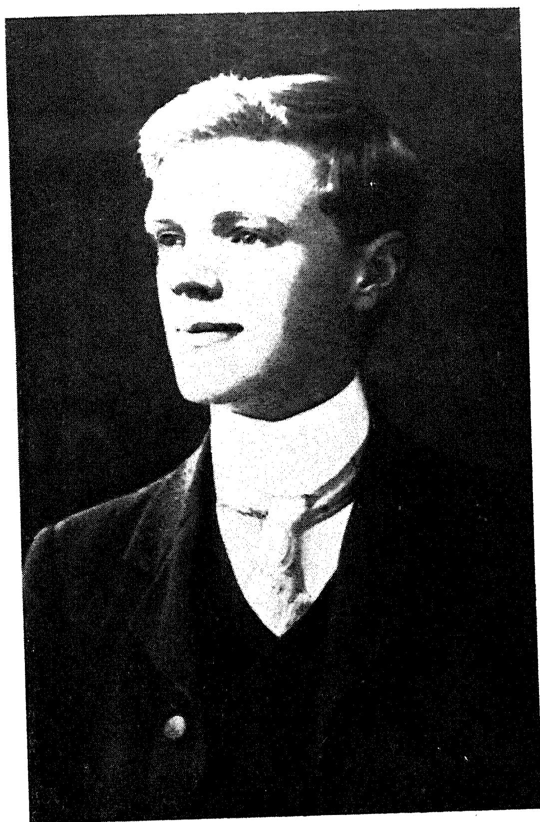
While he was speaking I had so clearly the knowledge that he must inevitably move far beyond us, and felt that he knew it himself, and was trying to devise some means of not severing himself from us all His idea did not attract me, nevertheless, and I suggested that

we might not agree if we all lived in the same house He was vexed at my doubt

'It *would* be all right, I'm sure it would,' he said 'People aren't really bad, not when you get to know them '

I remained sceptical, knowing that I could never fit in with such a scheme But Lawrence cherished the notion, and liked to dwell on it in those days

When his apprenticeship was over and he drew his first month's salary as an uncertificated teacher Lawrence said that he wanted to buy a toy horse for my small brother, one big enough for him to sit on and be pushed along It was Hill Top Wakes, and we went together to the Wakes ground, but the glare and smell of the naphtha flares, the raucous music, and the crowd had little attraction for us, and soon we walked away towards Eastwood At the shop next the old druggist's we selected the toy horse I couldn't think of letting Lawrence spend the money required for a big horse, so in the end he bought a fairly small one He was rather disappointed with his purchase, but knew it was wiser so Then he suggested that we should have an ice, and we went to the newly-opened confectioner's shop in the main street and ate our ice in the screened-off portion at the back We had never done anything of the kind before and it had the flavour of adventure It was a beautiful night and on the way home Lawrence said that instead of turning to go up the hill we would take



D. H. LAWRENCE IN 1906

the longer walk through High Park wood, and we emerged from the comparative gloom of the trees into the soft radiance of moonlight When we came to Felley Mill where the two brooks ran across the road the whole world seemed drenched in silence and the whiteness of moonlight It was indescribably beautiful, almost unearthly, and very moving Lawrence began to talk of love and of his mother with deep feeling

'A says she loves her, but she doesn't,' he said 'She can't, or she'd never treat her as she does at times '

By this I understood not that A treated her mother badly, but that her conception of love was of a different nature from Lawrence's And all the way up the hill Lawrence walked by my side, making me aware in short, almost incoherent sentences how deep, how vital was the feeling he had for his mother Not to be outdone, I spoke of the sympathy that had always existed between my mother and me, but he would not admit it on the same plane

'Your mother *doesn't* love you,' he said 'It's the boys she cares for, not you Can't you see it? It's only them she loves '

At the last gate he handed me the brown paper parcel containing the toy, and after lingering a moment, drinking in the beauty of the scene, he turned for home like a man in a trance of love This happened a week or so before his twentieth birthday

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When our family left the old homestead we had perforce to leave the Congregational chapel on account of the distance There was no Congregational chapel in the village near us, and somehow we could not make ourselves at home in any of the numerous little Bethels with local preachers, so we went to the church that stood on the hill It was new, a conscience gift from the land-enclosing aristocracy, and looked modern and utilitarian Lacking tradition of any kind it had no roots in the place, having been foisted upon the people just as the commons had been filched from them not very many years before Its atmosphere was chilling The place was not even dead, for it had never been alive, and was merely of a piece with the leprosy of industrialism There was never more than a handful of people besides the Sunday school children, to hear the local colliery magnate lisp his way through the morning lessons, and we who had been accustomed to hearing a reasoned discourse delighted to pick holes in the curate's string of platitudes that did duty for a sermon As time went on I became sensible of the beauty of the Book of Common Prayer, but try as I would I was unutterably depressed by the spiritual coldness of church and the stifling air of patronage So as we grew up we returned to the chapel at Eastwood, where we had roots and traditions of a sort My father's interest in chapel activities had waned after the Welsh minister went away, and he attended only when now and again, he drove mother and the little ones down

to morning service Once on the way home he overtook Lawrence, also returning from chapel Father drew up, 'Jump in, Bert,' he said, and brought Lawrence home for the day, prompted mainly by his desire to discuss the sermon with him

The chapel at Eastwood became the centre of our social life There was a Literary Society, and we all paid our shilling for a membership card I was wildly disappointed once when some lecture to which I had looked forward with extravagant anticipation came, and my brother 'didn't feel like turning out' Mother refused to let me go alone, though the lonely field path had no night terrors for me I was only appeased when Lawrence, who went to the lecture, told me 'it wasn't up to much' Another time there was a social, and I called for A Lawrence thought he wouldn't go, he had his homework to do A sudden impulse made me look at him and say, 'I wish you would come' He did not reply but I saw his face change A and I set off together, and the first thing I saw on arriving was a group of some four or five youths solemnly fishing in a box with a magnet I was dismayed, and fervently hoped Lawrence wouldn't come A few minutes later he walked into the room in that alert, expectant way of his, and I felt too ashamed to speak to him I had expected the social to be an affair of spontaneous fun and gaiety, and was depressed by the commonplace reality A ruddy young man with florid tenor voice sang 'The Boys of the Old Brigade' and 'The Old

Shako', and I could have cried when everybody applauded with gusto

After Sunday evening chapel a little company of family and friends would walk in twos and threes to the Lawrences' house There was the rustle and scent of Sunday clothes, and that indefinable tightness in the atmosphere that always made me feel slightly sick A general talk would go on, with Lawrence giving quick conversational change all round One could feel a tension between him and the other members of the family, as though they were afraid he was going to elude them Mrs Lawrence, in her black dress, would sit in the low rocking chair like a little figure of fate, coldly disapproving, while Lawrence fetched cakes and pastries out of the pantry, which he would press upon us who had a long walk home Sometimes we went into the parlour, and A would play the piano while we sang 'The heavens are telling', 'O rest in the Lord', 'Yes, the Lord is mindful of His own', and the exquisite 'Hymn to Music' Lawrence liked so much It was exciting, but there was an undercurrent of hostility running strong beneath it all I was always glad when we got out on the road again, and Lawrence invariably accompanied us

By this time the Lawrences had left 'Bleak House' and had moved to a slightly larger one some five minutes' walk away Lawrence showed me over this house with quiet pride It had a little entrance hall, with the stairs and the doors to the other rooms opening out

from it There was a cooking range in the scullery as well as in the living-room, a china closet in addition to the pantry, a cupboard under the side window where the school books were kept, and from the big window of the living-room was the view over the roofs of Eastwood to the square church tower standing high above The garden was pleasant and adjoined a field This is the house that Lawrence describes in *Aaron's Rod*, where the husband returns surreptitiously at night It was a comfortable house, comfortably furnished, and Lawrence was justly proud of his home

Ever since we had become pupil-teachers Lawrence had set himself to help me with my lessons He used to call himself 'your self-appointed mentor' and often adopted a pedagogical attitude towards me I on my part was so hungry for any crumbs of knowledge I ignored his occasional hectoring I returned from some errand on a Saturday afternoon of blazing sunshine to find him sitting on the stone bench at the back of the house in the shade Directly he saw me he drew a thin algebra text-book out of his pocket, one of his old High School books, and showed me where he had copied out the definitions, postulates, and axioms of Euclid on the inner covers He said in his excitable way

'Look here, I've just discovered you have to take maths in your exam , so you'd better begin '

Without more ado he began to rush through the definitions with me, always assuming that I had

followed his explanations Even earlier than this he had started giving me French lessons, and as my examination drew near he helped me more systematically It was arranged that I should call at his home for my French lesson on Friday evenings as I returned from the Centre Friday was the night when the little market was held in the open space in front of the Sun Inn, and we were often left alone while Mrs Lawrence went to the market The father I rarely saw He was always out in the evenings

We talked of many things besides French once the door was closed and there arose the magical sense of being alone together We tried to find out the differences in our own characters Lawrence told me that I was high and very deep, whereas he was very broad but comparatively shallow

'It's like this,' he said, taking a piece of chalk from his pocket and drawing spirals on the board below the mantelshelf 'Your impulse is to go higher and higher, towards perfection, and mine is to go forward, on and on, for aeons and aeons '

'What is an aeon?' I asked

'Time past all reckoning Beyond for ever and for ever,' he replied with shining eyes

It was during the year when he was an uncertificated teacher in the British School at Eastwood that Lawrence first spoke to me about writing We were in the field that ran alongside the Warren when he said quietly

'Have you ever thought of writing?'

'Oh yes,' I replied at once, 'I've thought of it all my life Have you?'

'Yes, I have,' he said in the same quiet tone 'Well, let's make a start I'm sure we could do something if we tried Lots of the things we say, the things you say, would go ever so well into a book '

This was a new idea to me and seemed to move things forward immensely But I was preparing for my examination, and he did not press it at the moment He was evidently trying to find himself One night when I went for a French lesson he said

'I knew it was your step outside — like a man's, yet not a man's ' Then looking at me with eyes alight, he said softly

'It will be *poetry* '

I took fire at that

'Well, isn't that the very greatest thing?'

'Ah, *you* say that,' he replied 'But what will the others say? That I'm a fool A collier's son a poet!'

'I can't see that that has anything to do with it,' I answered sincerely 'What does your father's occupation matter?' Lawrence and his father had little connection with one another in my mind He shook his head, and we went on with the lesson We were reading Victor Hugo's *Waterloo*, very difficult for me Lawrence drew a little plan in the book to show the position of the different armies

'*L'inattendu*,' he said 'The unexpected It's the

unexpected that happens,' he continued enigmatically Soon after eight o'clock we closed our books Lawrence made up the fire and we put on our outdoor things He turned the gas low, locked the door, and put the key on the scullery window ledge I dreaded to hear a footstep approaching to break the magical quality of our association When we were alone together we were in a world apart, where feeling and thought were intense, and we seemed to touch a reality that was beyond the ordinary workaday world But if his mother or sister returned, bringing with them the atmosphere of the market-place, our separate world was temporarily shattered, and was only recaptured with difficulty So we always tried to set off before anyone returned

Our way led us by Moorgreen pit and the quiet of the night was punctuated by the metallic rattle of the winding engine and the rhythmic sighing of the ventilating fans I cannot recall our conversation with exactness We talked about books and writers, and about life, gropingly, trying to find the hidden reality behind the appearance of things Towards one another we were utterly unself-conscious except for a strong feeling of mutual sympathy We were too content with the present to look into the future, and too deeply interested in the enigma of life to think of personal relations Even then I had the feeling that our walks and talks through the damp, windy autumn evenings were important, and would be memorable There was something creative about them, a growing and a taking

shape of some intangible thing An ineradicable loyalty to Lawrence grew up in me, his significance seemed beyond that of an ordinary man I felt that I was in the presence of greatness, and the facts of poverty and obscurity were irrelevant Once in our talks Shakespeare's name came up

'That can never be,' said Lawrence 'Shakespeare was the product of his age Everything was somehow concentrated in him Things are so split up now There can never be another Shakespeare'

Another time he said to me in great earnestness

'Every great man — every man who achieves anything, I mean — is founded in some woman Why shouldn't *you* be the woman I am founded in?'

Our Friday evening lessons were not always undisturbed Occasionally, one or other of the girls who drifted so casually in and out of the house would come in and sit watching us quizzically, and the atmosphere would become charged with curious cross-currents of feeling There was one girl in particular who delighted to create this electric atmosphere She had a ready wit and a caustic tongue, and her gibes flew like arrows Lawrence would sit with his head lowered over the book, trying to let the storm pass over him, and making short rejoinders only when he was directly appealed to His mother went about with a subtle smile, half-amused, half-ironic The mark for all the sly innuendo was of course myself I was too confused to speak

Besides I didn't dare to open my lips lest I should burst into tears, which was precisely what my tormentor was aiming at

This particular girl, who could be lavish in her good nature on occasion, seemed to reserve a special venom for any couple who showed signs of falling in love I heard her tell Lawrence, with every mark of conscious rectitude, how she and a companion would set themselves to annoy a courting couple They would dog their footsteps, following close on their heels, and destroy any possibility of intimate talk She pointed out a young man and girl, and said, 'Addy and I did them last Sunday night'

She seemed to expect Lawrence's approval, but he looked too pained to reply

The clannishness that was such a marked feature among collier folk did not make Lawrence's position any easier On the way home I reproached him for not saying one word on my behalf His reply was brief and emphatic

'I never take sides,' he said

When the Christmas term came to an end we discontinued the Friday night lessons, and worked at our house when Lawrence came up, as he usually did, on Saturday afternoon Sometimes we sat in the little recess in the kitchen while mother was bathing the small children in front of the fire It used to irritate her beyond bearing to hear us going through Euclid's theorems, for when the French lesson was over

Lawrence always asked if there was anything else I wanted, and I would pass my difficulties in algebra and geometry on to him This association of work and play inevitably drew us together, and a fine understanding grew up between us The flow of Lawrence's sympathy set in my direction and awakened a like response in me We sprang from the same roots, we had grown up together, our vital impulses were in profound sympathy, it was in the nature of things that we should be drawn to one another We did not speak of love although we knew it lay ahead, something that would have to be faced But the time was not ripe, and the world that arose spontaneously around us in the moments when we were alone together was such that we wanted to prolong it while we could In this we doubtless acted unconsciously There was a feeling of something between us that was rare and precious A shadow seemed to fall at Christmas when Lawrence said, inviting me to a party at his home

'I *would* come and meet you, but already they're beginning to say I care more for you than for them It isn't that,' he continued earnestly, 'they don't understand '

During the Christmas holidays Lawrence said several times

'We must read *Coriolanus* together,' and one afternoon he came up with his volume of Shakespeare under his arm and we sat down and read *Coriolanus* straight away I wondered at his look of puzzled concentration,

and felt that the play had a significance for him that I had not grasped

'You see, it's the mother who counts,' he said, 'the wife hardly at all The mother is everything to him '

Lawrence was always tirelessly occupied and spent much of his spare time painting flower studies in oils and in water colours He would sit on the sofa under the window in the living-room, often singing to himself in an undertone as he worked, quite undisturbed by the work and talk going on around him He painted a study of fruits for me, figs and dark green leaves, and sent it with a note saying it was a gift of a day of his life The time between Christmas and Easter when I was working hard for the King's Scholarship examination had a quality of rich intensity Life seemed preparing to burst into flower One day in February Lawrence sent a note by my father asking me to meet him at the entrance to High Park wood The day before he had been with a friend to a wood where snowdrops grew wild and he brought a bunch for me I fastened the flowers in my coat

'No, not there,' he said, 'nearer your face,' which I somehow felt to be a rare compliment As we walked through the wood he talked to me in his rapt way about Blake, telling me what a wonderful man he was, quite poor, who taught himself everything he knew, how he made pictures and wrote poems that were interdependent, and did the printing and engraving him-

self, in fact producing the book entirely by his own hands He told me that Blake's wife was a poor girl whom he taught to read, and also to print and engrave, and what a marvellous helpmate she was to him For a little time we lived with Blake and his wife

When we went in the house, fresh from the crisp air, Lawrence's face eager with talking, my father laughed at us, but my thoughts were with William Blake and his wife They began to talk about *Jane Eyre* which most of the family happened to be reading just then

'It was a funny sort of courtship,' father said

'Yes, it was a courtship without a kiss,' Lawrence replied, at which my father laughed again, and said

'It was a dry job, then '

It was about this time that Lawrence exclaimed vexedly

'Our A is getting awfully reticent nowadays She goes out and she won't say where she's been But as for me I have to tell them every single thing I've done — and said almost '

My examination was held just before Easter, and left me with a curious empty feeling of having nothing to do On Good Friday Lawrence came up to sow the flower seeds in our front garden — another task he had taken upon himself He brought the seeds, sweet peas, shirley poppies, eschscholtzias, and others of his own choosing, and debated seriously whether to sow the sweet peas in a row or in several small circles My

job was to fetch and carry While we were busy Lawrence said

'Charles Lamb says that if a childless man would know the joys of fatherhood let him sow seeds and watch them grow So here are the joys of fatherhood in a penny packet of seeds!' And something in his voice made me see him again, as a man apart

On Easter Sunday my brother cycled to chapel and I walked down alone After the service I went with Lawrence to his home His mother and elder sister E , who was now married, were in the house, and I was aware as always of the undercurrent of hostility Lawrence was drawing my attention to a volume in the bookcase and E said in a petulant voice

'When are you coming to see me, our William?'

'*Jamais*,' replied Lawrence, and glanced at me with a swift smile

'What do you mean?' she asked suspiciously

'Oh, I'll come some time,' he answered lightly

We set out together and had our marvellous walk as far as the field path At the gate Lawrence leaned towards me and said

'I shall come up to-morrow — early '

I went home with a singing in my heart He would come up to-morrow — early, and what more could heart desire? My brothers were going out cycling, my sister to Liverpool with her fiancé, but I was well content to stay at home when Lawrence was coming up — early

I spent the morning with mother and the small children, feeling still a little spent after the strain and excitement of the examination days In the front garden the clumps of narcissi stood in shadowed stillness I began to expect Lawrence soon after midday, but the afternoon passed, and when at last he wheeled his bicycle through the big yard-gate he was not the Lawrence of the night before

'You said you were coming early,' I reproached him He made no answer and avoided my glance When tea was over he suggested that we should read some French and we went into the stackyard and sat on a log beside the hay-stack Our dog Trip, a big white bull-terrier, came up to us with doggish delight and lay at our feet To my surprise Lawrence drove him away

'Go away, Trip,' he said 'We don't want you, you're not nice'

We read a little, but soon Lawrence closed the book and began to speak in a strained voice

'This this friendship between us is it keeping even is it getting out of balance, do you think?'

My mind barely grasped his words It was his voice that warned me

'I think it is keeping in balance,' I replied, bewildered 'I don't know what you mean'

'I was afraid,' he went on, as if the words had to be forced out, 'that the balance might be going

down on one side You might, I thought, I don't know, you might be getting to care too much for me '

I felt my heart turn cold, and replied

'I don't think so I haven't thought about it '

He was silent

'But why are you saying this?' I asked in deep dismay

'Well, they were talking last night, mother and E E asked mother if we were courting ' He spoke with difficulty 'They say we either ought to be engaged or else not go about together It's the penalty of being nineteen and twenty instead of fifteen and sixteen,' he concluded bitterly

I began to understand

'Ah — I always thought your mother didn't like me,' I said quietly

'It isn't that, you mustn't think that, mother has *nothing* against you,' he urged 'It's for your sake she spoke She says it isn't fair to you I may be keeping you from getting to like someone else She says I ought to know how I feel,' he went on painfully 'I've looked into my heart and I cannot find that I love you as a husband should love his wife Perhaps I shall, in time If ever I find I do, I'll tell you What about you? If you think you love me, tell me, and we'll be engaged What do you think?'

The world was spinning around me I was conscious of a fierce pain, of the body as well as of the spirit I tried not to let him see my tears As clearly as if in

actuality I saw the golden apple of life that had been lying at my finger tips recede irretrievably We sat some moments in an ashen silence

When I could speak I told him with truth that I had not thought about love, and that anyhow I couldn't become engaged under such circumstances He made a movement as though some obstacle was cleared out of the way A blankness came over me and I had to make an effort to attend to what he was saying in a lifeless voice

'Very well then, we'll decide what we're to do '

'There's nothing to decide,' I said 'We'll have nothing to do with one another '

'No,' he said with decision, 'we *shall* have something to do with one another We have so much in common, we can't give it all up Mother said we needn't give everything up, only we must know what footing we're on, that's all Life isn't so rich in friendship that we can afford to throw it away And this is the only friendship that's ripened,' he ended pathetically

I maintained that there was no footing at all, it would be better to drop everything But he would not hear of it

'No, we shall *not* We shall not give everything up it means too much to us We can't give it all up There's the question of writing, we want to talk about that And there's the French, we can go on reading together, surely? Only we'll read in the house, or where they can see us And chapel, that's important

You must keep on coming, and I'll ask Alan not to cycle and then he can walk home with us And when we go down the fields we'll take the youngsters with us We needn't let people think we're on a different footing from what we are, that's all Only we *must* go on talking to one another '

I listened in silence, stunned and indifferent He had evidently come up with the plan all worked out Presently he asked, miserably

'Will you tell your mother?'

I replied that I should not

'Shall I tell them, then?' he said

'No,' I answered, my tears getting the better of me 'They'd be awfully angry and tell you never to come again '

He turned and looked at me with wide, distraught eyes, and I said

'It has nothing to do with them I manage my own affairs '

We sat a little while in silence and misery, with the dusk coming on When we went into the house mother exclaimed

'Why, Bert, is something the matter? You're so white You've sat out there and got cold ' Then to me 'You shouldn't let him sit out like this, you ought to think '

I made no answer and Lawrence said

'I'm all right '

He sat on the sofa, looking painfully white The

children's painting-box lay open on the table. Lawrence glanced at it, then took a sheet of paper from an exercise book and wrote briefly. He handed the paper to me and I read:

'The children's painting-box needs replenishing. Who will subscribe? I open the list. D. H. L., 1s.'

Soon he said he would go home. Ordinarily I should have gone with him to the barn to fetch his bicycle and open the gate, but I drew the two small children on to my lap. At the window Lawrence turned and gave me an unforgettable look. I clung to the children and we began to sing the humorous ballads they were so fond of. Mother said, 'I'm sure there's something wrong with Bert, he's so white. And why has he gone home so early?'

I was glad that my sister was not sharing my bedroom that night. I could not have endured anyone to know the humiliation I suffered, and the sense of irreparable loss. For I realized that life was completely changed, that there could never be the same sympathy betweeen us again, so deep that it was unconscious. I knew, too, that a cruel injury had been done to young life, the delicate fabric of our relationship had been mutilated deliberately. The issue of love in its crudest sense had been forced upon us while we were still immature and unprepared. I felt that it was a cruel stroke designed to kill what was only in process of formation. In a letter to me five years later Lawrence described it as 'the slaughter of the fœtus in the womb'.

In all that he had said one sentence alone had significance for me — the words, spoken with difficulty, 'I have looked into my heart and I cannot find that I love you as a husband should love his wife ' I was bound to believe him, and that being so nothing else mattered What we kept and what we rejected was irrelevant, since the central focus of love was null I was too ignorant and unacquainted with life to understand that Lawrence used the word 'love' in a restricted and special sense I understood the word only in its total application Love split into its component elements was something outside my comprehension And I had no faith in or even desire for a friendship in which love was ruled out in advance My instinct was to break off completely Yet I couldn't bring myself to tell my parents, there was nothing I loathed so much as a domestic upheaval

A couple of days later a note came from Lawrence saying he hoped I was not grieving

'A man can do so many things,' he wrote 'He reads, he paints, he can get across his bicycle and go for a ride, but a woman sits at home and thinks ' He added that he would come up on the Friday and read some French with me When he came we placed our chairs near the back door to be in full view of the household But I felt humiliated and was unable to keep my mind on the French reading

He made me promise that I would not be 'stupid', but would go to his home now and again as if nothing

had happened When we went into the fields Lawrence called the two small children to accompany us They came running in delight, an ecstatic puppy bringing up the rear Lawrence wanted to talk about poetry, but I felt scornful of a poet who needed a couple of children and a puppy circling around as unconscious chaperones The talk was not a success, we ended by playing with the children

When Sunday came my brother again cycled to chapel As soon as the service was over I went out and took the nearest turn for home I had not gone far before I heard hurrying footsteps behind me Lawrence quickly overtook me, but he was not alone, with him was a youth I did not like He upbraided me bitterly for rushing away He particularly wanted to show me some roses he had been painting What with pleading and reproaches he prevailed upon me to turn back and look at the roses After this my brother walked down to chapel, and the three of us returned together

Lawrence insisted on my going to tea at his home and meeting his mother We exchanged a seared glance but never made any reference to what was uppermost in our thoughts

III

STUDENT DAYS

Lawrence attended the Beauvale Board School as a child, where, he used to tell us, the head master had the unpleasant habit of drawing unfavourable comparisons between him and his brother Ernest. At the age of eleven, however, he won a scholarship tenable at the Nottingham High School. He set no store on knowledge for its own sake, perhaps because he could acquire it so easily, and he told me that it would probably have been better for him if he had never won the scholarship. It was a great strain, he said, when one was only eleven, to have the long walk to the station and a daily train to catch. There was always the anxiety lest one should miss it, and again he was obliged to be away from home for the midday meal. Lawrence considered his scholarship a doubtful blessing.

On leaving school at fifteen Lawrence had for a few months a clerical post with a firm of manufacturers of surgical instruments in Nottingham, but this was interrupted by the attack of pneumonia, and he never returned to the warehouse. About a year later, in the autumn of 1902, when he had enjoyed to the full the freedom of a long convalescence, a vacancy for a pupil teacher occurred in the British School at Eastwood,

and the minister of the Congregational chapel, who acted as correspondent between the managers of the school and the local education authority, asked Lawrence's mother if she would let 'Bertie' fill the post So Lawrence entered upon a two years' apprenticeship At first his studies were directed by the head master of the school, but in 1903 he was drafted, along with other pupil teachers, to the Ilkeston Pupil-Teacher Centre

Lawrence's Centre days were very happy The head master of the Centre quickly perceived his unusual gifts and also, I think, something of his unique personality Anyhow they got on extremely well together, for Lawrence was a most conscientious and thorough worker His essays were read out as patterns to the class, and I remember the quiet pride of his smile when he told me In December, 1904, he sat for the King's Scholarship Examination, and came out in the First Division of the First Class As his apprenticeship did not end until the following July, our Centre head master volunteered to coach him for the London Matriculation Examination, which he took in the following June Lawrence felt the strain of examinations severely, and was always sure he had done badly On the Saturday evening before the examination week we were all in the garden, my parents and the little ones, Lawrence and I Father happened to be holding a bundle of rhubarb under his arm, and Lawrence, gazing intently at the pink ends of the rhubarb stalks, murmured

'I'd much rather be describing that rhubarb than sitting for matric ' And during the week he wrote to me of the misery of 'pen-driving in the city heat'

For the next year Lawrence taught as an uncertificated teacher in the British School at Eastwood, saving most of his earnings towards his college expenses It was during this year that he began the writing of what eventually became *The White Peacock* In September, 1906, he entered Nottingham University College as a normal student for a two years' course of training

Although he had matriculated Lawrence did not wish to take a degree course His real interest centred on his writing and not on his studies The professor who was at that time head of the Normal Department, however, persuaded him to take up an Arts degree course, and promised to give him some special tuition in Latin Lawrence also arranged to have some private lessons from our Scotch minister This was in the autumn of his first college year The lessons went on perhaps for a term, and Lawrence informed me, rather savagely, that he had 'broken the back of the Latin', but soon after this he told me that the professor at College was unable to give him the extra help he had promised

'He can't spare the time for it,' Lawrence said 'I know he can't pull it in with all he has to do, but why did he promise?' So he dropped the degree course and the lessons with our minister came to an end He told me this with obvious satisfaction He was glad to be

rid of the bother of working for a degree, and he settled down to his writing and the ordinary college course

Lawrence entered College in a mood of wistful anticipation He felt it might be a step into a fuller life, he hoped for a lead of some kind, for contact with things that were vitally alive In this he was acutely disappointed He said to me before the course began, 'Surely one should get *something* from those men,' i e the tutors The truth was that he got nothing He made no essential contact with any member of the staff The nearest approach to a personal relationship was with a lecturer popularly known as 'Botany' Smith He apparently did perceive that Lawrence was an unusual individual, for the latter said to me one day with a touch of vexation, 'Botany Smith says I'm not *possessed* with an idea, I'm *obsessed* with it What do you think, is it true?'

He even got so far as to be invited to tea at Mr Smith's, but as Lawrence put it, 'Botany's baby developed measles' at the last moment, so he never went to tea

The only member of the staff he genuinely admired was the head of the Department of Modern Languages 'He's my favourite Prof', Lawrence said And again 'He really *is* a gentleman He's quite elegant He leans back in his chair and points to the blackboard, too elegant to get on his feet And he addresses us as "gentlemen" He's sarcastic, of course ' But there

was never any personal contact Lawrence merely admired this professor from a distance as a scholar and a gentleman

His old and now deceased professor of Education Lawrence characterized as a well-meaning but timid and ineffectual man I used to hear him telling my brother with malicious chuckles how this professor would go to no end of trouble to get the men students together away from the girls in order to talk to them 'as man to man' Then all he could do was to stand up in front of them looking uncomfortable, making vague allusions, and beating about the bush, never succeeding in coming to his point, whatever it was he wanted to say

'As man to man,' Lawrence would repeat derisively 'Why can't he say what he's got to say and have done with it, if he's really got anything to say He's frightened of the whole business He no more dare call a spade a spade '

Lawrence was perhaps rather fond of old Principal Symes At any rate he recommended me to attend a course of Saturday morning lectures on the Metaphysical Poets (who were not metaphysical at all, said Lawrence) given by Principal Symes, only warning me that the lecturer mumbled so, I probably shouldn't be able to make out a word he said

'But they'll put him in the smallest room, so perhaps it will be all right,' he said I went to the lectures, and Lawrence was there, too, keen and alert, taking notes We must have got beyond the Metaphysical Poets

because I remember with what feeling the Principal recited to us the lines from Wordsworth's 'The Lost Love', shaking his grey head

> But she is in her grave, and, oh,
> The difference to me

Occasionally after the lecture Lawrence would take me to some quiet street where we could talk and ask me intently what I thought of the last pages of writing that he had brought to me Then he would catch a midday train home, and I, returning at tea time, would be greeted by his quick, bright glance as he sat with our family at tea For the rest his attitude towards the college staff was one of slightly cynical tolerance Sometimes on Saturday evening he would mimic one of them for our amusement

It may be that he never quite got over the treatment meted out to his first essay The subject, I think, was 'Autumn', and Lawrence began with a reference to Augustine Birrell, saying he would take a flying leap into his subject He was obviously trying to strike an arresting note He brought the essay to me after it had passed through the hands of the English Mistress She had apparently interpreted his attempt to attract attention as impertinence The essay was heavily scored in red ink with corrections, emendations and exhortations in the best manner of an elderly schoolmistress putting a forward youth in his place Lawrence had to write it again — 'Give me a *proper* essay

this time ' He was mortified at being treated 'like a school-kid '

'I know it isn't an ordinary essay,' he said, 'it wasn't meant to be, and I thought she'd have the wit to perceive it But I'll give her the kid's stuff she evidently wants,' he concluded in chagrin I was surprised to see him so hurt at this reception of his essay — after all, what else could he expect? It would seem that the mistress soon forgot the incident, for Lawrence used to say she was 'quite sweet' with him, but he wrote no more experimental essays for her

Lawrence never quite lost the impression that the Normal students were regarded as 'school-kids' He was actually a year or two older than the average student, while in the matter of psychic and emotional development he was of course immensely in advance, and the petty restrictions weighed more heavily on him There was nothing adult about the life in College, and there was a decided atmosphere of repression, and this was probably at the bottom of his deep disappointment with college life

'It's different with the engineers,' he used to say 'You should see the way they go about the place. They look down on us, of course — school teachers!'

An important part of the college training was school-practice, and Lawrence spent some weeks in a school that was regarded as one of the most advanced in the town In common with nearly all students he detested this part of the training He told me what extraordinary

essays were produced in the top class, and how proud the teacher was of them

'He makes them do it, of course Full of onomatopoetic words, just the sounds that animals and birds make, in an essay on spring—sheer imitation It's vile,' said Lawrence, 'absolute ruin of their spontaneous expression He thinks it's fine, but it's very bad,' he said, shaking his head with a look of pain

Even in those days Lawrence used to declare that the main purpose of education was to teach people how to use their leisure, or rather how to use themselves He denounced vehemently the teaching of subjects like arithmetic in evening schools

'What they ought to do,' he said, 'is recreational work Teach the adolescents to sing and dance and do gymnastics, and make things they enjoy making It's a crime to expect lads to do sums at night after a day in the pit'

The subject he enjoyed most of all in college was music, which of course was singing He liked the Folk songs, particularly the ballad of 'Henry Martin' and 'I sowed the seeds of love' We bought the song book in use at College, *A Golden Treasury of Song*, and had great times singing 'I triumph, I triumph', 'The Lay of the Imprisoned Huntsman', 'Vulcan's Song' and practically everything in the book I have seen Lawrence standing in the open doorway of the cowshed while my brother was milking, humming a tune from the sol-fa notes by the light of the hurricane lamp for

the latter to learn And he once persuaded my brother to cycle the twelve hilly miles into Nottingham to listen to a rehearsal of the College concert But we often sang without the piano, just sitting round the parlour fire, from the National song-book, sometimes taking two and even three parts, and in all this Lawrence was the moving spirit

Lawrence advised my father not to send me to College

'Don't let her go,' he said, 'it isn't worth while They grind them all through the same mill They'll make her just like all the others ' So I qualified by taking the external Certificate examination, teaching in school all day and working at home in the evenings, quite independently Later on, Lawrence told me that if he had known what College was like he would never have made the sacrifice of those two years and all the expense, but would have qualified in the same way that I did

All the time he was in College Lawrence was working continuously at *The White Peacock* (called 'Nethermere' in those days) He completed it for the first time by the end of the first college year, and during the second year he entirely rewrote it, altering and developing the story a great deal He was writing poems too, in a small thick note-book with the college arms on the cover He passed all his writings on to me, secretly, and insisted upon a criticism, or at least, I was to tell him what I thought of them When he had finished *The*

White Peacock for the second time he said 'Everything that I am now, all of me, so far, is in that I think a man puts everything he is into a book — a real book '

In the final examination of the Board of Education Lawrence had six distinctions Education, French, Botany, History, Geography, and Mathematics Ironically, he had no distinction in English He always said that he passed examinations not by the amount he knew, but by sheer mother-wit

'It isn't what I know,' he used to declare 'When I first see the questions I always think I can't answer one of them It's only when I've looked into myself a bit that I begin to see what to put down But it's pure mother-wit I do it from, not knowledge ' On one of his birthdays we had given him Motley's *Rise of the Dutch Republic*, and he said he owed his distinction in history entirely to that work

When I found I was not to go to College I told Lawrence of my ambition to matriculate and eventually work up to a degree He became rigid at once

'Why do you want to take matric ?' he asked dictatorially For the moment I could think of no reason except that I was fond of study and rather enjoyed the excitement of an examination I said something of this in reply and Lawrence answered severely

'The reason you want to take matric is because some rather nice girls you know have taken it That's no reason why you should It would be no end of a fag for you, and you might not pass after all, and think

what a disappointment that would be, not to mention the expense'

Then, doubtless aware of my crushed silence, he said in a milder tone

'You might so easily become a blue-stocking, you know'

There was an instance of a girl-student in College who was awarded a valuable scholarship in biology Lawrence spoke passionately against her

'She's a grub,' he said, 'grubbing for facts like some people go grubbing for money They might have given it to a man, who would have made use of it'

When his fit of spleen was over he said

'It isn't because they've given it to a woman that I object It's not that at all, really But she'll just go on piling one bit of knowledge on top of another bit of knowledge, and make no creative use of it Whereas perhaps a man would'

The Lawrence that came out of College at the end of two years was a different man from the Lawrence who entered For one thing he had come up against the materialist attitude to life and religion and it seared his youthful freshness We were still regular attenders at the Congregational chapel where our minister used to preach interesting sermons that were more lectures than sermons, and on the walk home we would discuss the sermon and religion in general This was the time when the specific Christian dogmas came up for discussion, particularly after we had read the Rev

R J Campbell's book *The New Theology* Such things as the Virgin Birth, the Atonement, and the Miracles we talked out and discarded as irrelevant to the real matter of religion Far more than in any dogma, Lawrence was interested in the question as to how the old religious ideas stood in relation to the scientific discoveries that were sweeping away the familiar landmarks On one of our walks home he gave my brother and me a vivid description of the nebular theory of the universe, and he was troubled by the discrepancy between such a hypothesis of the origin of things and the God postulated by the Congregational chapel He resented the tone of authority adopted by the conventionally religious people, including his mother He said, 'Even mother doesn't like me when I'm different I've got to be as they are, or else I'm all wrong' He used to complain that in chapel one had to sit still and seem to agree with all that the minister said He would have liked to be at liberty to stand up and challenge his statements It was a matter of grief to him, too, that whoever opposed the orthodox teaching was cast out of the church, which claimed to have a monopoly of the right way of living

Lawrence had an idea of writing to our minister telling him of the agnostic authors he had read, particularly J M Robertson, T H Huxley and Haeckel, and asking him to define his position with regard to the standpoint of these writers The letter was to be signed by the three of us, Lawrence, my brother (who

was four years his senior) and myself I thought it was an excellent method of getting the minister to say where he stood, and warmly supported the idea, but Lawrence drew me up in his sharp way

'It's all very well for you,' he said, 'you'll get none of the blame I shall be the young man gone very much wrong '

Probably the thought of his mother held him back, for the letter was never sent to the minister

There had been a moment in his early student days when Lawrence had hinted to me that he might enter the ministry I felt sceptical I was sure he had it in him to plough a deeper furrow than the ministry offered I did not feel, either, that he wanted to be a minister It was doubtless his mother's suggestion Such a thing would have been dear to her heart On a Sunday evening when for the moment he and I were alone, he took up a Bible and said with a defiant look

'If the Bible gives me a clue, then I shall enter the ministry ' He opened the Bible at random but the message was inconclusive This was before he had read the rationalistic authors who made such an impression upon him

During his years at the University he completely outgrew the conception of life that chapel and all it stood for offered It was based too much upon negation He said

'The chapel system of morality is all based upon

"Thou shalt not " We want one based upon "Thou shalt" '

It was not the moral rule in particular that Lawrence was up in arms against, but the meagreness of outlook, and the refusal to acknowledge any other attitude to life as being worthy of consideration The influence of the University as such played very little part in his liberation from religious dogma It came as a natural growth He seemed to feel himself compelled to take up a rationalistic standpoint with regard to religion, although it made him miserable When I said that I was sure of God's existence, he asked me coldly for my proof Yet at the same period, when my brother was admitted to membership of the chapel and remained for the Communion service, and afterwards made some irreverent remark, I could feel that Lawrence was deeply shocked He would try to represent himself to me as a complete materialist, but he was too emphatic to be convincing

Once when his elder brother was on a visit and had been discussing religious beliefs with their mother, Lawrence said to me with a grin

'Ma's much more upset about G than about me '

'Isn't that rather surprising?' I asked

'Ah, he's older and fixed, that's what she thinks I'm young, I shall return to the fold,' he said, enigmatically

It was during these years that Lawrence seemed to lose much of his spontaneous gaiety In earlier days

the whole family, from father downwards, would light up at his coming But now he often came into the house in a brooding, abstracted mood, and would sit quiet, as if withdrawn into himself The eclipse of his sunny nature was probably due as much to the growing complexity of his inner problems as to any influence of the wider world But he was always vividly alive when he began to talk

Lawrence was not sorry when the college years came to an end, except for the anxiety of getting a job and having to leave home He had made no significant friendship He thought teaching very hard work 'To be able to teach Standard IV properly,' he would say in his vehement fashion, 'you need to know an enormous lot ' And he often said, 'The worst of teaching is, it takes so much out of you and gives you nothing in return You never know what you've done, or if you've really done anything Manual work is much more satisfying You can *see* something for all your pains, you *know* whether you've done the job well or not, but with teaching you *never* know ' At other times he would say he had not enough patience to make a good teacher, and in that one respect he compared himself with Carlyle, whom we were reading at the moment 'I bet he was an awful teacher,' Lawrence said, 'he'd be impatient and irritable, wouldn't he?' I never took these grumblings too seriously, because I knew what a quick, intuitive sympathy he had with people, particularly children, and I was sure there was a comradely

give and take between him and his pupils that, like charity, covered a multitude of sins He used to say he was lacking in a sense of justice He wrote to me 'You are so just I guess you never punish the wrong kid As for me, I put up with them until I can stand them no longer, then I land the nearest, and as likely as not, he's innocent' After he had been teaching for a year in Croydon he said with grim mirth, 'When I first went to Croydon I couldn't teach for nuts'

It would be a mistake to suppose that Lawrence was definitely unhappy in College As he often said, it took a good deal to bore him His capacity for enjoyment was much too strong for College to make him unhappy All the same he was glad when the course came to an end It had been a period of disillusion and a progress in isolation College and all that it implied had been weighed in the balance and found wanting

As he said to me once in a tone of deep chagrin, 'I've never really had a father' What he was asking perhaps unconsciously of the University was that it should partly make up for his lack of a father and give him a spiritual and intellectual lead into life itself, and this is hardly deemed to be the job of university professors

Teaching in Lawrence's day was one of the sweated trades At the end of his arduous and expensive training he could command in his home county a wage of slightly over thirty shillings a week He was bitterly

chagrined at the situation and refused to offer his services to any education authority that would pay him less than £90 a year It was not until October, after being without a post for three months, that he was appointed assistant master in a Croydon school at a yearly salary of £95 Lawrence out of work was a sardonic figure He spent much of his time at the farm, handing his manuscript over to me, and accompanying my brother about the farm work

Lawrence's work in the Croydon school was very different from what it had been in the British School at Eastwood He told me that he was responsible for Art and Nature-Study Occasionally he asked me to send him specimens for his nature-study lessons Once he asked for twigs of the sallow-willow, and gave me the most precise directions as to which tree in the Warren I was to gather them from When spring came he wrote with delight about the flowering almonds, and sent me a box of the blossom because we had never seen the miracle of the flowering almond in our countryside I never had the impression that Lawrence was unhappy as a teacher It was simply that he felt his job was writing and not teaching, consequently he begrudged having to spend the freshest hours of the day in school when he wanted to be doing the work he was urged to do from within

IV

LITERARY FORMATION

During the convalescence that followed the attack of pneumonia when he was sixteen Lawrence made a habit of writing long letters to us, sometimes several in a week, which he would send up by my father They were accounts of what he had been doing or reading, bits of himself put down on paper, often very amusingly, with all the joyous abandon that was such a strong characteristic of his at this time The letters were addressed sometimes to one, sometimes to another, occasionally to the family as a whole — 'Dear Haggites,' and we all read them and laughed over them, for we looked to Lawrence for most of our entertainment It was only by imperceptible degrees that his letters came to be addressed chiefly to me, but still, as I thought, intended for the family as a whole I said to him, 'Of course, I always pass your letters round for everybody to read,' and he replied, 'You needn't pass on *all* my letters for everybody to read' Thus we two became the correspondents, but father was always the carrier Now and again he would forget to deliver a letter, and then would exclaim several days later

'Oh, by Jove! There's a letter from Bert in my pocket,' and I would search through the pockets of

his rough tweed coat until I came upon the folded sheets of exercise paper We never used envelopes in those days

One of the most treasured possessions of the Lawrence household was a set of large volumes bound in green cloth containing long extracts from famous authors The books had belonged to Ernest, and were regarded with a reverence amounting to awe Lawrence must have made many literary acquaintances through the medium of these volumes As a mark of rare favour I was once allowed to borrow one of them, but the favour was never repeated

The first book I recollect Lawrence bringing to me was Louisa Alcott's *Little Women* We thought the story delightful, and set about finding correspondences I was Jo, there was no doubt about that, and Lawrence was Laurie 'Only not quite so nice, do you think?' he said with a glance that asked to be contradicted Not long afterwards he brought Watts-Dunton's *Aylwin*, and then was very contrite because he thought the ghost scene might have frightened me

'I ought not to have given it to you,' he said repeatedly, and asked anxiously if mother was angry with him

Both his family and mine were members of the library which was part of the Mechanics' Institute at Eastwood and was open only for two hours on Thursday evenings How it came about that Lawrence and I usually went to the library together to choose the books

for our respective families, I don't remember, but the visit to the library was at that time the outstanding event of the week As a rule I should put the books to be returned in the milk-cart, and father would leave them at his home Lawrence would change the books for us, if it happened to be wet and I was unable to go, and send up the new ones next morning But I always went if possible, though Lawrence inevitably did most of the choosing He would take possession of my list and pounce on the book he was looking for, he always seemed to know just where to look for it We were both excited by this hunting among books Even then he seemed to be acquainted with nearly everything in the little library We had also to bear in mind the varying tastes of the two families, and the matter of selection was sometimes a lengthy business On more than one occasion when I placed the books we proposed to take for our family upon the counter, the old librarian, who gave his time and services to the Institution, would regard me gravely over his glasses, and say

'Young lady, you are entitled to one bound volume and one magazine,' but he rarely insisted on the letter of the law Then Lawrence and I would set off for my home literally burdened with books During the walk we discussed what we had read last, but our discussion was not exactly criticism, indeed it was not criticism at all, but a vivid re-creation of the substance of our reading Lawrence would ask me in his abrupt way

what I thought of such and such a character, and we would compare notes and talk out our differences The characters interested us most, and there was usually a more or less unconscious identification of them with ourselves, so that our reading became a kind of personal experience Scott's novels in particular we talked over in this way, and the scenes and events of his stories were more real to us than our actual surroundings We read Rider Haggard at about the same time, but somehow he never provided the same rich basis for discussion I remember how Lawrence pressed me to read Anthony Hope's *Rupert of Hentzau* and *The Prisoner of Zenda* 'You will like them, I'm certain you'll like them,' he assured me, and I did like them, but all the same, I felt they were trivial A quite different book that he recommended me to read and that impressed me profoundly was Dean Farrer's *Darkness and Dawn* This period, when Lawrence would be 16–17, was a kind of orgy of reading I think we were hardly aware of the outside world

When I called for Lawrence to accompany me to the library, if no one else was in the house, he would take a volume of poetry from the bookcase (Longfellow in the early days) and read to me, always, as it seemed, with one ear cocked for an alien footstep In this way he read to me most of 'Hiawatha', which I thought long-winded and rather thin, and 'Evangeline', which again Lawrence liked far better than I did He seemed disappointed when I did not care for the poems he

read, so I kept my opinion to myself, for I could never bear to hurt his feelings He used to look so delicately excited, sitting there on the sofa, his head resting on one of his small, vigorous hands, and the other with fingers ready to turn the page, ready to close the book and swiftly put it away if a step should sound outside in the entry In time he read Tennyson's 'Morte d'Arthur', which I really did like, and 'Lancelot and Elaine', that struck me as a revolting story But when he came to 'Maud', dwelling especially on the lyrical passages, and read

> Birds in the high Hall garden
> When twilight was falling,
> Maud, Maud, Maud, Maud,
> They were crying and calling,

which evoked memories of our own wood, then I thought that was what poetry should be like Later on he would read 'Ulysses' and would often quote

> Though much is taken, much abides

Other poems he read to me time after time were 'The Lotus Eaters' and 'The Lady of Shalott', which he somehow hinted applied to me, and 'Locksley Hall', where again he conveyed the impression that he was telling me something about himself

Scott was succeeded in our affections by Dickens, with *David Copperfield* pre-eminent I was aware even then that Lawrence felt an affinity with the hero of that

story — 'the nicest young man in the world', he would quote mischievously *Bleak House* and *Dombey and Son* were great favourites And to say that we *read* the books gives no adequate idea of what really happened It was the entering into possession of a new world, a widening and enlargement of life There was *The Cloister and the Hearth* that we all tried to read together, Lawrence and those of our family who were old enough to read, almost snatching the book out of one another's hands in our eagerness to follow Gerard's thrilling adventures And how we each described the particular bit of the story that had given us the greatest thrill! Then we read Fennimore Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans* and *The Pathfinder*, with its impression of the expanse of level lake and silence, and R L Stevenson's *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped* But when Lawrence spoke of *The Master of Ballantrae* there was quite another tone

'Do read it,' he begged 'I want to know what you think of it It's not a bit like Stevenson's other books' *Lorna Doone* was a story after our own hearts, which we all re-enacted in fancy on our own Annesley Hills One of the patches of woodland we named Bagworthy Forest, and we scoured down the hillside with imaginary Doones at our heels

It was on a wintry Sunday afternoon that we explored Felley Mill Farm for the first time — a little crowd of us, my elder brother and sister, my younger brothers, Lawrence and I Like Annesley Lodge Farm

it was unoccupied, the poisoned ground lying fallow, recovering from intensive rabbit farming We went cautiously through the little side gate into the garden, down which the windows of the two parlours looked blankly There were snowdrops under the windows, and we gathered some, putting them with ivy leaves which we pulled from the stone wall beside the mill-race, where the wheel used to be, and where now the water slid down with a ceaseless rush into the pond below The mill-pond was on our left, higher than our heads We watched the water rushing down and smelt the acrid odour from the mould under the ivy leaves Then we went through the little gate at the end of the garden and up the steep slope of the sluice, and crossed to the far side of the pond As there was no one to forbid us we went to the extreme end and walked over the ice to the islet covered with low alders and brushwood It was pure adventure The snowdrops and the ivy leaves and the smell of the earth mould, the ceaseless rushing of the water and our own excitement created an impression of something more real and permanent than our actual presence there We seemed momentarily to have penetrated to the abiding spirit of the place

With *Adam Bede* and *The Mill on the Floss* we found ourselves in deeper waters Lawrence adored *The Mill on the Floss*, but always declared that George Eliot had 'gone and spoilt it half way through' He could not

forgive the marriage of the vital Maggie Tulliver to the cripple Philip He used to say 'It was wrong, wrong She should never have made her do it' When, later on, we came to Schopenhauer's essay on *The Metaphysics of Love*, against the passage 'The third consideration is the *skeleton*, since it is the foundation of the type of the species Next to old age and disease, nothing disgusts us so much as a deformed shape, even the most beautiful face cannot make amends for it' Lawrence wrote in the margin 'Maggie Tulliver and Philip' Maggie Tulliver was his favourite heroine He used to say that the smooth branches of the beech trees (which he especially admired) reminded him of Maggie Tulliver's arms Over *Romola* he shook his head 'Poor George Eliot, she said the writing of *Romola* made an old woman of her'

A book that exercised a real fascination over him was *Jane Eyre* He seemed to brood over the relationship between Jane and Rochester, whose attitude in particular interested him 'He calls her a *thing*,' he said to me 'You know, where he finds Jane in the rose-garden, and he says, "You curious thing" How could one say that in French? It would have to be *chose* It wouldn't go at all'

Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* took the household by storm, my father being as eager as any of us We found a big illustrated volume of *The Four Georges and English Humorists*, and the rollicking Dick Steele and the prim Addison stood out as real figures, the first of the

journalists It was at the house of Lawrence's head master that we came across a volume of Hogarth's drawings and delighted in their bold portrayal of life There also we found a big volume of Swift's writings, and read a short account of his life Swift, towering menacingly above his age, impressed us deeply Lawrence told me about Stella and the *Little Journal*, and we pondered their strange love story

This might be called the second period of our reading The first was a sheer revelling in books, the second was almost purely receptive, then we reached the stage which in my mind coincides roughly with my introduction to Palgrave's *Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics*, when I was eighteen This became a kind of Bible to us Lawrence carried the little red volume in his pocket and read to me on every opportunity, usually out in the fields He must have read almost every poem to me at one time or another, but those that stand out most clearly in my memory are Shelley's 'The Invitation', 'The Recollection', 'Rarely, rarely comest thou', 'Ode to the west wind', and 'Swiftly walk over the western wave' Of Wordsworth there was 'The Solitary Reaper', 'I wandered lonely as a cloud', and the 'Ode on Intimations of Immortality', while Keats' 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' seemed to have the tang of our own dank meadows These, with others, he would read to me over and over again, and he pointed out that Book IV comprised nearly half the volume

'Getting nearer to our own day,' he said significantly

In Book III he was very fond of Cowper's two poems to Mary Unwin Underneath the second of the two he wrote 'Poor Cowper, when he felt he was going mad again ' He liked Burns, and when he had read 'Mary Morison', he said, smiling 'No one was quite so deft as Burns at turning a compliment ' We had many favourites in Book II Lawrence adored Herbert's 'The Gifts of God' and talked to me about the mystical quality of the poets of that age Against Shirley's 'Death the Leveller' he wrote in my copy 'This poem De Quincey says he heard sung in a chamber of a tiny Welsh inn where he was staying awhile during his rambles The unseen singer was a young Methodist girl, and although used to operatic performances De Quincey was more pleased and delighted with her song than he had ever been before or since ' Lawrence underlined

> Only the actions of the just
> Smell sweet and blossom in their dust

He liked 'Fair Helen' very much, and later he taught it to his boys in the Croydon school He used to say that boys ought to learn love poems at school, as a preparation for love in real life 'The Great Adventurer' was another favourite 'Cromwell — in love?' he wrote beneath the poem Book I was for us mainly Shakespeare's Sonnets, and we marvelled at their perfection and their nearness All this was spread over a

number of years, and meant more to our development than one knows how to put into words At Christmas we exchanged tiny gift books Lawrence gave me once a selection of Shelley and at other times *The Blessed Damozel* and the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, and I gave him Blake's *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*

We read essays, too, at this time Bacon's *Essays* was one of our set books Lawrence detested Bacon's calculated moralizing, but he adored Lamb, and dwelt affectionately on 'Dream Children' and 'The South Sea House', and we chuckled over 'A Dissertation on Roast Pig' He read and liked Emerson's *Essays* and became wildly enthusiastic over Thoreau's *Walden*, especially the essay on 'The Ponds' I remember Lawrence waiting one morning of a holiday to accompany my brother who was going to work in the Greasley fields, and telling us meanwhile how Thoreau built himself a hut in the woods and lived beside the pond It was a still, sunless morning, with a brooding light over the landscape, and the atmosphere he conveyed in his description seemed to tally perfectly with that particular morning

Then we came to Carlyle Lawrence said that he was reading the *French Revolution* with Carlyle on one knee and the dictionary on the other He was loud in his denunciation of Carlyle's affectation of a German style, but he insisted on my reading the book The stabbing of Marat by Charlotte Corday excited him —

just like a bit out of *A Tale of Two Cities*, he said We read also *Heroes and Hero Worship* and *Sartor Resartus* This was in the spring of 1906 just before Lawrence went to College, and his early flamboyant delight in reading was changing into a seriousness that was at times almost frightening in its intensity He said to me weightily, 'I feel I have something to say,' and again, 'I think it will be didactic '

Other books that belong to this period were Mrs Gaskell's *Cranford*, and I remember the glow of his tender delight in that simple tale And there was *Alice in Wonderland* that we bought for the little ones and revelled in ourselves A book that Lawrence absolutely forbade me to read was *Wuthering Heights*

'*You* mustn't read it,' he said in his excited way And when I asked why not, he said

'You mustn't, that's all It might upset you ' I said I meant to read it anyhow, and then he became serious and made me promise I wouldn't His mother had read it, and I remember hearing her say with comic exaggeration what she would like to do to 'that Heathcliffe', only she pronounced it 'Hethcliffe'

Once when we had just left his home Lawrence said to me, 'I don't believe they were like us when they were young, do you? Our parents, I mean I don't imagine mother ever read Carlyle It was Annie Swan, I think '

And another time he said

'I'm sure they don't feel things as we do, I don't care what they say They talk about them too much

If you really feel a thing deeply you can't talk about it, can you?'

Lawrence now began to talk definitely of writing He said he thought he should try a novel, and wanted me to try to write one too, so that we could compare notes

'The usual plan is to take two couples and develop their relationships,' he said 'Most of George Eliot's are on that plan Anyhow, I don't want a plot, I should be bored with it I shall try two couples for a start '

It was in the Whitsuntide holiday that he brought the first pages to me I had been away from home, and returned to find Lawrence waiting uneasily Out in the fields he gave me the manuscript and asked me if I had any to show him I shook my head

'We've broken the ice,' he said in a tense voice He told me to put the writing away and read it when he had gone I was to tell him what I thought of it the next time he came I was interested to find that his story was laid around Felley Mill Farm These first pages described himself standing on the banks of the mill-pond, watching the fish glide in and out The farm had a tenant now, and Lawrence had accompanied me there several times on some errand or other From now on he brought some pages almost every time he came up He would pass them to me in secret and wait restlessly until we were out in the fields and he could begin to talk about his writing One evening we were

looking for the little purple orchids that were to be found only in the Long Close, and Lawrence was saying.

'I'm afraid it will be a mosaic. My time's so broken up. In the morning when I should love to sit down to it I have to go to school. And when you've done the day's teaching all your brightness has gone. By the time I get back to the writing I'm another man. I don't see how there can be any continuity about it. It will have to be a mosaic, a mosaic of moods.'

What fascinated me about his writing was the way he would weave incidents from our daily life into it. Mother was looking in the wood for the nest of a hen that was laying away, and came across an old kettle containing a nest and a bright-eyed robin sitting on her eggs. We showed it to Lawrence, who seemed moved at the sight. Soon after it appeared in his writing, described with amazing exactness and intensity of observation. Then there was the lark's nest, a mere hole where a cow's hoof had sunk into the soft ground, and the four speckled eggs lying there, so unprotected. Lawrence knelt beside it, almost trembling with excitement. We went to look at it each time he came until at last the quivering bubs lay on the ground, with feathers fine like hairs.

A fragment of conversation about writing and writers comes back to me. We were in the wood where the stiff clay soil was waterlogged in all except the driest

seasons, and we were picking our way carefully over the muddy patches

'You see, it was really George Eliot who started it all,' Lawrence was saying in the deliberate way he had of speaking when he was trying to work something out in his own mind 'And how wild they all were with her for doing it It was she who started putting all the action inside Before, you know, with Fielding and the others, it had been outside Now I wonder which is right?'

I always found myself most interested in what people thought and experienced within themselves, so I ventured the opinion that George Eliot had been right

'I wonder if she was,' Lawrence replied thoughtfully 'You know I can't help thinking there ought to be a bit of both '

We now began to read the great French authors. We had already done simple tales, *Picciola*, *Jettatura* and *Un Philosophe sous les toits*, and we had read Pierre Loti's *Pêcheur d'Islande* on the cliffs overlooking the blue water of Robin Hood's Bay Lawrence had a great admiration for French literature and for Balzac in particular Yet I remember his remarking on more than one occasion that great as the French language was, it had no equivalent word for *wonder* — a serious lack in his opinion

'I think *wonder* is one of the finest words in our language,' he said, 'and yet the French have no word for it You'd have to say *merveille* or *étonnement* — not

the same at all And *home — chez moi*, it's cold and impersonal compared with the English *home*' All the same, he liked to imagine that he had a French ancestor He surprised us one Saturday evening by saying in the tone of mortification that we usually heard when he spoke of his father

'The latest from father He tells us now that his grandfather was a Frenchman and fought in the battle of Waterloo, and that his sword used to hang in the shop when father was a lad This is the first we've heard of it'

We laughed, and asked Lawrence how, if his great-grandfather was a Frenchman, he came to live at Old Brinsley Lawrence shrugged his shoulders

'Refugee, I suppose,' he said briefly

It was in quite another mood that, standing by the wall at the end of the reservoir and looking along the water, he said sombrely

'If English people don't like what I write, and I think it's probable they won't, I shall settle in France and write for the French'

There were times when he was full of doubt and dissatisfaction with himself and everything around him It was difficult then to see in the introspective young man of twenty-two the youth we had first known, brimming with delight in life and all it had to offer He used to call these gloomy fits his 'Hamlet' moments

He was very impressed by Balzac's *La Peau de Chagrin* He described the story to us minutely, dwel-

ling upon the progressive shrinking of the skin, which involved the diminishing of its owner's life 'With every wish that was granted, the skin shrank,' he said, demonstrating with his palm The symbolic implication seemed to oppress him I was only nineteen when he bought Maupassant's *Tales* for me to read in a translation, telling me to take care my mother didn't see them They made me wretched Maupassant's presentation of life seemed to me brutal and one-sided, but Lawrence said I mustn't mind about that It was the technique that mattered I could see that he was thrilled to the marrow Then a few days later came a note full of remorse 'What am I doing to you? You used to be so vigorous, so full of interest in all sorts of things Don't take too much notice of me You mustn't allow yourself to be hurt by Maupassant or by me' After this came Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, which Lawrence admired immensely and got very excited about He also read *Salammbô*, which he said was rather boring There was doubtless much that I never heard of We went on with our lighter reading and delighted in *Lettres de mon Moulin* He read Ruskin at this period, and passed on *Sesame and Lilies* to my eldest brother During one of the summer vacations when they spent some days together thatching haystacks in the fields at Greasley Lawrence told me he had been reading Virgil's *Georgics* to him, translating from the Latin This was while *The White Peacock* was taking shape in his mind

Sometimes we had a play-reading at home We read *Macbeth* with father taking the part of Macduff, and horrified at the speech he had to make when he came face to face with Macbeth He stopped to exclaim, 'Oh dear, oh dear! How awful!' Lawrence stood knitting his brows, half-amused, half-vexed at the interruption He was excited and inclined to be domineering over the play-readings, but we knew him too well to take offence He admired Ibsen tremendously, and recommended my brother to give me a volume of his plays on my birthday, so we read *Rosmersholme*, which was Lawrence's favourite, and *The Lady from the Sea*, of which he gave us a full description in advance, saying it was the most poetical of Ibsen's plays that he had read Finally we read *Hedda Gabler* which he thoroughly disliked I remember how severely he took me to task for omitting a phrase about someone who used to 'keep mistresses' I simply couldn't read it aloud Lawrence said nothing at the time, but he taxed me with it later 'Why did you miss that passage — about mistresses? You should have read it as it stood What do you want to make such evasions for . '

We went to the theatre occasionally I saw *Hamlet* for the first time with Lawrence and my brother Lawrence was intensely excited He went through Hamlet's soliloquy afterwards in our kitchen — 'To be, or not to be ' And it was the same when we had seen *Macbeth* — 'Is this a dagger I see before me, the

handle towards my hand ?' grasping at an imaginary dagger It was his characteristic blending of the serious with the comic Of course we laughed at him, but the two aspects were plainly visible Going to the theatre was the same as reading, Lawrence identified himself with the play, and for the time being lived in its atmosphere Now and again we saw a D'Oyley Carte opera — Lawrence was often humming a tune from *Il Trovatore* — and we heard *Tannhäuser* Once on a Saturday afternoon we went to a Gilbert and Sullivan opera, and on another occasion we saw Galsworthy's *Strife*

While Lawrence was at college Sarah Bernhardt came to our theatre at Nottingham, and he went to see her in *La Dame aux Camelias* The next day he wrote to me that the play had so upset him that at the end he rushed from his place and found himself battering at the doors until an attendant came and let him out He ran to the station to find the last train gone, and had to walk home He added, 'I feel frightened I realize that I, too, might become enslaved to a woman ' On the Saturday afternoon he came up and told us all about the play, and showed us how Sarah Bernhardt died in the last scene He looked quite worn out with emotion

Lawrence greatly admired George Borrow He spent a whole sunny Saturday evening up on the Annesley Hills telling me about Borrow's life and about

Lavengro, making the story so vivid that Borrow seemed to be an actual acquaintance He said that Borrow had mingled autobiography and fiction so inextricably in *Lavengro* that the most astute critics could not be sure where the one ended and the other began From his subtle smile I felt he was wondering whether he might not do something in the same fashion himself

We read Meredith, in poetry as well as prose—*Love in the Valley* had a special significance for him There was Gissing, whose *Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* he brought to us in a paper-covered edition, and my parents enjoyed it so much Hardy's name had been familiar in our house since childhood days Mark Rutherford's *Autobiography* and *Clara Hopgood* Lawrence admired with reservations He told me that if I ever did write (and he was always urging me to) my writing would somewhat resemble Mark Rutherford's We read Oscar Wilde's *Ballad of Reading Gaol* and *Intentions* Lawrence read *The Picture of Dorian Grey*, and earnestly begged me not to read it He brought some of Aubrey Beardsley's drawings for us to see, and the Irish plays of J M Synge He was enthusiastic about a Nature magazine that came out in fortnightly parts He came up with the first part one Sunday afternoon and stood by the field gate looking with intense appreciation at the frontispiece, a photograph of a sedge-warbler feeding a young cuckoo Lawrence's intimacy with nature was a constant revelation We

spent some of the most exquisite moments of our lives gathering flowers, ladysmocks and cowslips Lawrence pointed out to me that Shakespeare must have noticed the difference between the thrum-eyed and the pin-eyed flowers He said once, 'It's a funny thing You love the wood and all this far more than I do, yet I can describe it and you can't'

It was during his second year in College that Lawrence began to read philosophy I cannot be sure whether he read Kant at this period, but he advised one of my brothers to give me Schopenhauer's *Essays* for my birthday, and read *The Metaphysics of Love* aloud to us He translated the Latin quotations in pencil in the margin This essay made a deep impression upon him He was vehemently of Schopenhauer's opinion that a white skin is not natural to man, and had a fierce argument with my brother who disputed the statement that 'fair hair and blue eyes are a deviation from type' Lawrence said pointedly

'For me, a brown skin is the only beautiful one' He followed the reasoning closely, as always applying it to himself, and his own case When he read 'Accordingly, everyone in the first place will infinitely prefer and ardently desire those who are most beautiful,' he broke off to remark

'That's just the trouble, though I see what is most beautiful, and I *don't* desire it.' Schopenhauer seemed to fit in with his mood He thought he found there an

explanation of his own divided attitude and he remained under the influence of this line of reasoning for some time Another book that absorbed him was *The Memoirs of Benvenuto Cellini* He admitted that Cellini was a scamp, but an interesting one Renan's *Life of Jesus* belongs to this period, but we were disappointed in it 'It is Jesus according to the likeness of Ernest Renan,' said Lawrence The materialist philosophy came in full blast with T H Huxley's *Man's Place in Nature*, Darwin's *Origin of Species*, and Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe* This rationalistic teaching impressed Lawrence deeply He came upon it at a time of spiritual fog, when the lights of orthodox religion and morality were proving wholly inadequate, perplexed as he was by his own personal dilemma My feeling was that he tried to fill up a spiritual vacuum by swallowing materialism at a gulp But it did not carry him far He would tell me with vehemence that nature is red in tooth and claw, with the implication that 'nature' included human nature Yet when he heard the cry of a rabbit tracked by a weasel he would shiver in pain His dominant feeling seemed to be a sense of hopelessness

There was Locke's *On Human Understanding*, and Bishop Berkeley who said that everything exists in one's own consciousness Lawrence used to insist with particular emphasis — 'If God does not exist in my consciousness, then for me God does not exist ' And he carried the argument over to many other aspects of his life at that time In all his reading he seemed to be

groping for something that he could lay hold of as a guiding principle in his own life There was never the least touch of the academic or the scholastic in his approach What he read was to be applied here and now, he seemed to consider all his philosophical reading from the angle of his own personal need He read also Herbert Spencer and John Stuart Mill and William James, whose *Pragmatism* especially appealed to him He liked also *Some Varieties of Religious Experience* and recommended me to read it

During his second autumn in College, Lawrence devised a plan for raising a little money A local journal offered a prize of three guineas for the best Christmas story Lawrence wrote three short stories, and suggested that I, a college friend, and he, should each submit one story to this journal As luck would have it the story I sent was accepted and came out under my name It was a sentimental little story called *A Prelude to a Happy Christmas*, and was Lawrence's first appearance in print A cheque for three guineas came, so I signed and my father cashed Lawrence's first cheque As he gave the money to him, father remarked

'Well Bert, it's the first, but I hope it won't be the last'

The story that Lawrence submitted himself and that was rejected, he re-wrote, and it subsequently appeared in the *English Review* under the title of *A Fragment of Stained Glass* The third story probably formed the

basis for *The White Stocking* It was an idealized picture of his mother as a young girl going to a ball at the Castle and drawing out a long white stocking in mistake for a pocket handkerchief

As my twenty-first birthday approached Lawrence talked to me earnestly about my future — did I want to go into the town or remain in the country? It all depended upon whether I was going to attempt to write 'If you feel you have it in you to write something as fresh as the dew on the hills,' he said, 'stay in the country and we'll give you books to help you to continue growing But if you are not going to write, then go into the town and enlarge your experience in actual contact with people ' In the end he brought me his own copy of Tolstoy's *Anna Karénina* He said it was the greatest novel in the world, and we revelled in it, father, my brother, and I We felt most sympathy in those days with Levin and Kitty, and followed their experiments in farming with deep interest The book was like a piece of new experience, and the people real individuals whom we could discuss and argue about as though they had been personal friends Lawrence, however, was more interested in the problem of Anna.

We continued to read poetry One day in a Christmas holiday Lawrence and I and the girl who had sent the story about the white stocking to the local newspaper, trudged over the frozen snow to the ruins of

Beauvale Abbey It was a day of brilliant sunshine, and the three of us perched in a tree that leaned over a pond, while Lawrence read Coleridge's *Christabel* It was upon this ruined abbey that he had centred his story *A Fragment of Stained Glass* Browning was a great favourite Lawrence read *Paracelsus* and *The Ring and the Book* But best of all he liked some of the shorter pieces from a pocket volume of *Selections*, and read to me many times 'Andrea del Sarto', 'One Word More', 'Porphyria's Lover', 'Any Wife to Any Husband', 'Never the Time and the Place', and 'Rabbi Ben Ezra' These poems he read to me over and over again, usually on a Saturday evening after supper, when my brothers were out, mother and the little ones in bed, and father in his corner engrossed in the *Daily News*

Lawrence was constantly bringing his writing to me, and I always had to tell him what I thought of it He would ask whether the characters had developed, and whether the conversation was natural, if it was what people really would say He found conversation easy and wondered if it was too easy He feared he had a tendency towards verbosity, perhaps he ought to condense his writing more Saturday evening was the best time for talking over his work, but in a busy household like ours I naturally had to help Sometimes when he very much wanted to talk, Lawrence would follow me from the kitchen into the parlour and back again from parlour to kitchen until I was free to sit

down and talk to him He always declared that he did the writing for me

'Every bit I do is for you,' he said 'Whenever I've done a fresh bit I think to myself "What will she say to this?"' And of his poetry he said, 'All my poetry belongs to you'

I had not a high opinion of the first version of *The White Peacock*, in which George married Letty Lawrence persuaded me on a Saturday morning when I happened to be going into Nottingham, to take a tram ride out to Basford and bring him word what the registry office looked like It was a solid, square building, the most unromantic place imaginable I can see now his bright, subtle smile when I told him my impressions The next pages of writing he brought to me described George and Letty being married there The novel, apart from its setting, seemed to me story-bookish and unreal The upright young farmer, hopelessly in love with the superior young lady (very conscious of her social superiority) who had been served shabbily by a still more socially superior young man, married her after a puritanical exposition of the circumstances by her mother, and a highly dubious conjugal life began in the melancholy farmhouse, with, one imagined, Letty always in the parlour and George in the kitchen Yet in spite of its sentimentality, a thread of genuine romance ran through the story, something in the atmosphere was alive The poem *Love on the Farm* is a sort of epitome of this early version

of the novel, although I knew it originally as two separate poems I think Lawrence despised the story from the bottom of his heart, for he immediately started to rewrite it He must have shown it to his mother because when we were on holiday at Robin Hood's Bay I asked her what she thought of it, and she replied, in a pained voice

'To think that *my* son should have written such a story,' referring presumably to Letty's situation

In the second writing the story was radically altered and the characters became more like flesh and blood, except Cyril, who remained as he began, old-maidish Lawrence concentrated upon George, and the figure of Annable emerged, at first only cynically brutal, but later developing into symbolic stature I was horrified at Annable's first appearance and remonstrated with Lawrence, but he shook his head decisively, and said

'He *has* to be there Don't you see why? He makes a sort of balance Otherwise it's too much one thing, too much *me*,' and grinned

The only thing I did see, and that obscurely enough, was that Annable seemed to be a focus for all Lawrence's despair over the materialist view of life he felt compelled to accept for lack of an alternative

Lawrence's extraordinary obsession with gamekeepers is difficult to account for The only encounter with a gamekeeper that occurred during the years of my acquaintance with him took place when he was a youth of seventeen A party of us, including my three

brothers and Lawrence's sister, penetrated unwittingly into a private portion of the Annesley woods There we found a spot that looked like fairyland — a stream flowing between smooth green banks starred with primroses, which are rare in our woods We were enchanted, we gathered the flowers and sang and made plenty of noise Suddenly a burly, red-haired keeper with a youth close on his heels burst through the trees He took my eldest brother and Lawrence aside and made them give their names Then he told us all that these 'pimroses' were private property and made us leave our bunches on the ground We trooped home crestfallen, Lawrence white-faced and still

The scene in the old churchyard followed almost immediately upon an evening some five years later, when Lawrence and I had walked as far as the disused and crumbling church We climbed the fence into the churchyard and ventured forward step by step until we could look down upon the terrace in front of the Hall The next time Lawrence came up he brought the scene of the peacock and the angel, and Annable's caustic comments

Lawrence entirely rewrote the novel and gave it its final shape during his first year in Croydon, and the story developed into a subtle study in self-portraiture Cyril and Letty are each aspects of Lawrence, with Emily as a foil to both George developed from the simple, God-fearing yeoman into the man whose inner growth has been arrested, with the consequent prolifera-

tion into decay It was an immense stride forward from the first conception, and he struck me as a figure of sinister prophecy It seems to me not without significance that in this first novel Lawrence should portray no fewer than three men whose lives come to complete frustration, while Cyril is a purely negative figure

The rounding-off of the story Lawrence wrote during our brief moment of harmony He said in a letter 'Do you mind if, *in the novel*, I make Emily marry Tom?' I didn't mind in the least I thought the final turn to Emily's fortunes one of the happiest human touches in the book Lawrence often said, 'To write, I *must* be happy I can't get on with things when I'm unhappy,' and I know it was abundantly true

When Lawrence left home and went to teach in Croydon he found a new wealth of reading in the public library there Sometimes when he had particularly enjoyed a book he would send it to me with urgent instructions to leave off whatever I might happen to be doing and read it immediately In this manner he sent me Charles Doughty's *Adam Cast Forth*, and I was especially to note where Eve, after long separation, finds Adam, and he tells her to bind herself to him with the vine strands, lest they be separated again by the Wind of God Another time, in swift enthusiasm, he sent me Francis Thompson's essay on Shelley, and again there came *Atalanta in Calydon*, and my attention was directed to the lyrics of the choruses

One holiday, I think it was Whitsuntide, he brought up in great enthusiasm Samuel Butler's *Erewhon*, and out in the fields he told me about the wonderful opening chapter

'It begins like a book of travel,' he said 'You'd never dream it was satire It's so fresh, so romantic, such a sense of a new country And then he just turns all our ideas of society upside down, but with the greatest seriousness ' So he told me practically the whole content of the book as we walked to the Warren to see what new things had come into flower since last he was there

On an evening of a holiday in the spring of 1909 he read his essay 'Art and the Individual' to a little gathering of the Eastwood intelligentsia at the house of a friend, where he sprawled at full length on the hearthrug, shy at reading his own work It was a member of this little circle, a Socialist and a Suffragette, who first showed us A R Orage's *New Age* which Lawrence took regularly for a time He liked it far more for its literature than its politics He was never really interested in politics, and was quickly irritated and bored by the subject We used to enjoy particularly the *Literary Causerie* by Jacob Tonson

It was in the library at Croydon that Lawrence found Nietzsche He never mentioned him directly to me, nor suggested that I should read him, but I began to hear about the 'Will to Power', and perceived that he had come upon something new and engrossing

He wrote to me at one time, 'I read nothing serious now, only Pushkin, very polished and elegant, and the delicate irony of Anatole France's *Isle des Pinguins*' He read, of course, all the modern English authors I remember his telling me how Wells' *Tono-Bungay* made him feel in despair about himself

'Most authors write out of their own personality,' he said 'Wells does, of course But I'm not sure that I've got a big enough personality to write out of'

He liked Galsworthy's *A Country House* very much, and Bennett's *The Old Wives' Tale*, and Conrad's *Lord Jim* He admired George Moore and sent me *Evelyn Innes* and *Esther Waters* When he read Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* he wrote to me 'It will wring your woman's heart some day,' which meant that his heart had been wrung by the story Gilbert Murray's translations from Euripides were a great delight He gave me *The Trojan Women*, which I think was his favourite, and he passed on to me *Medea*, *Elektra*, *The Bacchae*, and Aristophanes' *Frogs* He liked Turgenev immensely, and gave me his copy of *Fathers and Sons*, and impressed upon me that I must read *Rudin* He read Maxim Gorky, but didn't care much for him He talked to me about George Sand and Alfred de Musset, both of whom he read, and at this time the two great poetic lights in his firmament were Verlaine and Baudelaire When he sent me a book he would occasionally copy out a verse, or even a whole poem, from one or other of these poets on the fly-leaf

He was a diligent searcher of the second-hand book-stalls and barrows in Surrey Street, Croydon There he found a school edition of Wordsworth's poems, which he sent to me, he said, for the sake of *The Solitary Reaper* On the fly-leaf he copied from *Les Fleurs du Mal*

> Soyez béni, mon Dieu, qui donnez la souffrance
> Comme un divin remède à nos impuretés
> Et comme la meilleure et la plus pure essence
> Qui prépare les forts aux saintes voluptes!

He came across *The Playboy of the Western World* in a tattered condition, had it bound, and sent it to me On the fly-leaf of this he copied in its entirety Baudelaire's *Sonnet d'Automne* Another time he picked up W H Hudson's *South American Sketches* for twopence and passed it on as a wonderful find, and at various times he sent me a volume of *Don Quixote*, promising to try and find the companion volume, one of Burns' *Letters*, and Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*, drawing my attention to the beautiful type and the fine old leather bindings

Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* was one of his great books He would sometimes write, 'I'm sending you a Whitmanesque poem,' when he was enclosing one of his own There was Maeterlinck's *Pelleas and Melisande* and *The Sightless* that impressed him briefly At the Christmas that immediately followed his mother's death he sent me Leon Daudet's *Le partage*

de l'enfant, saying it would help me to realize the position of the child in a home where the parents do not get on well together Somewhere about this time Lawrence read Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, and I remember how he frowned in a puzzled way and said

'It's very great, but I don't like it I don't quite understand it I must read it again '

The last of all the books that Lawrence passed on to me was *Toil of Men* by Izrael Querido It was a story of the Dutch bulb farms, told with a brutality that struck me as exaggeration for the sake of effect I returned it to Lawrence along with several other books shortly before he went abroad in 1912

This account of Lawrence's reading makes no claim to be exhaustive It is merely an attempt to indicate the nature and scope of his reading as far as possible in the order in which it occurred He certainly read much more than is indicated here, he seemed to read everything His vitality and interest were the same in the sphere of books as in other departments of life He took in eagerly all that came to his hand, shaping it according to his need, and sharing his zest with characteristic generosity

V

CONFLICT

After Lawrence had defined his attitude towards me things went on outwardly as before, but inwardly everything was changed We had become self-conscious and aware of a barrier He developed a highly critical tone If I stooped to touch a flower he would lecture me severely

'Why must you *touch* in order to enjoy? I can see how beautiful the daffodil is, but I don't want to touch it What you need to cultivate is detachment You want to be able to stand aloof and enjoy a thing without any desire to touch it '

And if I caught up my little brother and hugged him I had fallen into the same error I must cultivate detachment, that was the great thing, to be detached I found it very confusing

On an evening of that same spring (when Lawrence was in his twenty-first year) his sister cycled up to the farm She had come to tell me something that shocked us all very much A friend of theirs was in deep disgrace — in A 's conventional phrase he had 'got a girl into trouble' On the following evening Lawrence came himself, looking white and upset As soon as we

were alone he asked me if I had heard about his friend – they had been High School boys together He seemed relieved that I knew He said his mother had told him about it that morning He was very distressed His mother had said how terrible might be the consequences of only five minutes' self-forgetfulness And it seemed to add to the tragedy that the young people had only seen one another on Sunday evenings after chapel – so Lawrence said He told me these things in a voice that sounded sick with misery, and I felt very concerned, wondering why he should take it so to heart Then he startled me by bursting out vehemently

'Thank God I've been saved from that so far '

I was puzzled, feeling in the dark about the whole business, and very sorry for Lawrence's distress He seemed relieved after he had told me about it

In the August before he entered College the Lawrences made up a party (including myself) and spent a fortnight at Mablethorpe on the Lincolnshire coast This was the first of our seaside holidays, and Lawrence was full of delightful anticipations – we would take sketching books and do all sorts of jolly things We stayed at a cottage about a mile out of the little town A dyke ran beside the road, and we had to cross a plank bridge to reach the cottage, standing alone in its garden Lawrence went over the house in delight

'It's so comfortable, as nice as home,' he said There was a mirror over the sideboard and one over the mantelpiece

'What a lot of mirrors,' he said 'We shall all get vain '

'Or else modest,' I suggested He gave me a quick look

'Ah, perhaps modest,' he agreed

It was windy on Sunday morning, and I tied my hat on with a broad silk scarf Lawrence was looking at me with shining eyes

'Does it suit me?' I asked, laughing He turned to his mother 'Look at her, mother She says, does it suit her?'

His mother gave me a bitter glance, and turned away, and the light died out of Lawrence's face

In the evening he and I wandered along the beach waiting to see the moon rise over the sea We set off light-heartedly enough, but gradually some dark power seemed to take possession of Lawrence, and when the final beauty of the moonrise broke upon us, something seemed to explode inside him I cannot remember now what he said, but his words were wild, and he appeared to be in great distress of mind, and possibly also of body In some way I was to blame He upbraided me bitterly, and when I protested he blamed himself, and poured himself out in a torrent of passionate words

This scene was repeated with increasing intensity on two successive occasions when I spent my annual holiday with the Lawrences and their friends The

second time was at Robin Hood's Bay, when the combined beauty of moonlight and sea, together with whatever effect my presence had upon him, seemed to make him distraught He talked and behaved so wildly that it is difficult to recall what he did actually say or do I only remember that he stalked some distance from me like a strange, wild creature, and kept up a stream of upbraiding, or something that sounded like it When we were climbing the steep little street and I stopped a moment to rest, a swift change of mood came over him He fell to bitter imprecation of himself, declaring that it was all his fault and he was hurting me I was aware of a deep tenderness within, that he held in check with an iron will

On the third occasion at Flamborough the tension was much more severe Lawrence skipped from one white boulder to another in the vast amphitheatre of the bay until I could have doubted whether he was indeed a human being I was really frightened then — not physically, but deep in my soul He created an atmosphere not of death, which after all is part of mortality, but of an utter negation of life, as though he had become dehumanized And always, somehow or other, it was my fault, or partly my fault They were unforgettable experiences I never spoke about them, for I was at a loss to describe them

At Mablethorpe our favourite way to the sea was a grassy lane between the dykes we called the Green

Way It led across the single track railway and right into the sandhills Later on we came across a painting in Nottingham Castle showing just such a bit of the Lincolnshire coast, the yellow dunes and the pale sea-holly We felt sure it was our own Green Way

Lawrence's father was with us and one morning he and we young people set off for a long walk over the level lanes We went to Theddlethorpe All Saints and Theddlethorpe St Helens and called at a tiny ale-house kept by one Susannah Stones, licensed for six days only We had bread and cheese and ginger beer, and Mr Lawrence had a can of ale We came to a windmill actually at work, and watching the great sails revolve, thought of Gerard in *The Cloister and the Hearth* On the way home we found watercress growing in a brook, and Lawrence and his father gleefully gathered some to take home for tea Words cannot convey Lawrence's brimming delight in all these simple things

I could only afford to stay one week and as Lawrence's father was also going home we travelled together Mr Lawrence seemed almost old and inarticulate All through the journey he sat gazing at the landscape with eyes that perhaps saw nothing, so dim and expressionless was their look Once he glanced at me, I thought he was going to speak, but he changed his mind and went on staring dimly through the window Looking back over my week's holiday with its poignant memories of happiness and pain I was not far from tears, and

perhaps my companion was aware of it When we reached our destination he turned in a kindly way to help me with my bag

The inner change in our attitude to one another grew gradually more pronounced Lawrence said wistfully

'If only you'd been a man, things might have been perfect', then added immediately. 'but it wouldn't have been any good, because then you wouldn't have cared about me '

He declared I was like Emily Brontë, which I resented, feeling it was a false short-cut to understanding me, like sticking a label on To all my protests he merely shook his head

'You *are* like her, you are intense and introspective like she was '

From time to time I was aware of a clumsy probing into my personality

'It isn't as if you had a strong intellect,' he said meditatively Since Lawrence was my criterion in the matter of intellect I agreed cheerfully

'I don't suppose I have I never thought so '

'No,' he said as if in regret 'No, you're purely emotional '

'Well, what if I am?' I asked

'Well, you see, it means that you're governed entirely by your feelings. You don't *think*, you *feel* There's a lot of difference, you know '

'Perhaps that's because I am more sure of my feelings than my thoughts,' I replied

'Yes, but don't you see, that proves you're not intellectual,' he answered 'Now, as for me, I trust entirely to the intellect'

I was not sure enough of my ground to challenge him The painful probing continued He startled me by saying, reflectively

'You're not really popular, are you?'

I laughed and said that probably I was not, but anyhow, what did it matter? I was rather hurt when he went on

'Very few people *like* you, do they?'

'I don't know *very* many people,' I replied

'That doesn't matter,' he returned 'The point is you don't get on very well with people' He seemed to be following a pre-conceived train of thought

'I get on well enough,' I replied, in vexation 'Why should I wish to be popular? People like me as well as I want them to'

'That's just it,' he declared 'At the bottom you don't really care whether people like you or not'

'Why should I care? I can't help it, either way'

'No, but you see,' he said with sudden gentleness, 'there must be some fault in you if *nobody* likes you The others can't *all* be wrong'

'But they *do* like me, those who know me properly,' I protested, knowing how hopeless it was to expect the people he had in mind to like me

Finally he told me I had no sense of humour, and it occurred to me that if it were so I should be too angry to listen to him

'It seemed at one time as if I had a little, Bert,' I said, half in fun, but he replied crushingly

'You have absolutely none Everything has a fixed value for you '

I hated the process of internal dismemberment and said to him one day

'What comes next when you've finished taking me to pieces? Will you be able to put me together again?'

He looked startled

'I *don't* take you to pieces Only you're so hard to understand '

This was one side of our friendship There were still times of intuitive understanding when we were hardly conscious of ourselves as separate individuals It was only when Lawrence deliberately set himself to apprehend me by way of the intellect that we were hopelessly at odds I could only reveal myself to him by what I was, and his crude gropings into the recesses of my personality confused me and made me shut up tight He said once wistfully

'You'd be easier to understand, you know, if you would be a bit naughty sometimes '

I knew what he meant and felt guilty, but of something deeper than naughtiness The invisible barrier that had been raised between us seemed to be freezing the springs of my spontaneity, and the necessity to

repress my vital feelings made me cramped and negative But I could see no way of escape His attempts to understand me intellectually were paralysing, and the denial of love took all the meaning out of life I would often wake with a start just before dawn when the air was filled with the unearthly twitterings of the birds, and, realizing instantly the blight that had settled on my life, feel like a castaway on some inhuman shore

Lawrence often seemed very unhappy His eyes had a look of suffering I could feel at times the bitter struggle he had with himself to maintain his position of aloofness Once a word of endearment escaped him, but he drew himself up and repudiated it with vehemence He began to tell me that his feeling for me was entirely intellectual and spiritual, and had nothing to do with the physical side of life

'It comes to this, you know,' he said 'You have no sexual attraction at all, none whatever'

I had only the vaguest conception of his meaning, and thought he was telling me that I was unattractive in a general way I did not feel greatly perturbed, and said

'Well, how can I help it? Is it my fault?'

'I don't suppose so It simply is the fact You are absolutely lacking in sexual attraction, and that's the truth of the matter'

He told me this at the time when Schopenhauer's *Metaphysics of Love* exercised such a fascination over him He seemed to find confirmation for his attitude

in the passage 'Because the kernel of passionate love turns on the anticipation of the child to be born and its nature, it is quite possible for friendship, without any admixture of sexual love, to exist between two young, good-looking people of different sex if there is perfect fitness of temperament and intellectual capacity,' which he marked and wrote in the margin '*Qu'en pensez-vous?*'

Maupassant's *Tales* also influenced him in the direction of regarding love as something purely physical It depressed me greatly

Lawrence was still a great favourite with our family and visited the farm as frequently as ever He said sometimes, whimsically

'Ah, you Haggites see the best of me!' The only one who was critical of him was my elder sister She saw more of Lawrence at Eastwood than the rest of us, and his tendency to be all things to all people made her feel that he was insincere When his twenty-first birthday approached we decided to give him a present from the family as a whole He said he would like pictures to copy So on a Saturday afternoon Lawrence, my brother and I went to Nottingham, and in an old-established bookshop we found an incomplete series of English water-colours which they said we could have for a guinea (These are the pictures to which Lawrence refers in his article 'Making Pictures') He thought it was far too much for us to spend on him, but accepted them on condition that they were to be

regarded as belonging to both families We had tea in a café near Victoria station, with Lawrence looking radiantly happy Later he had his photograph taken and sent a copy to us, with a note for me saying that 'the troublesome original would probably come up and bother me the next day'

At Christmas he gave me a tiny selection of Shelley's poems, for the sake of *The Sensitive Plant*, he said It was a gift-book and on the inner cover was printed 'To give it my loving friend to keep ' For some reason Lawrence inscribed it to 'La Curieuse' and told me with scorn in his voice

'They wouldn't believe me when I said it simply meant "the curious one" They actually had to look it up in the dictionary '

Our French reading still went on in a desultory fashion, and Lawrence suggested we should each keep a diary in French He insisted on my keeping one, but I never saw his I was to put down my *thoughts* (he was emphatic about that) and he would correct and reply in French He used to ask for my diary each week with a pedagogical air Once in reply to some entry of mine he wrote '*Pour faire croître quelque-chose, il faut le supprimer*' That I understood and knew that he was speaking for both of us, but I was puzzled when, another time, he wrote across the page '*Quant à moi, je suis grand animal*' I demurred, but he insisted, nodding emphatically, 'Yes, yes, I *am* '

The question of our relationship was a subject he could not let alone He would argue the matter from all sorts of standpoints Once he said suddenly

'I don't believe in the idea of one man one woman, do you? I mean there isn't just one woman and one only that a man can marry There might be half a dozen that would do equally well What do you think? You're not the complement of me, you don't *complement* me in any way Do you think you do?'

It sounded like something he had been turning over in his mind, probably discussing with his mother, and he wanted to convince himself

Another time he said with great seriousness

'The trouble is, you see, I'm not one man, but two'

I refused to accept the idea, but he persisted gravely

'It's true, it *is* so I am two men inside one skin'

Then he began to tell me that one of his selves could and did love me, but to the other self I had no significance at all I repudiated the notion vigorously

'I can't see it,' I said 'To me you are a whole man If I am to love you at all, it must be as a complete whole'

'But I am *not* a complete whole I tell you, I am two men One man in me loves you, but the other never can love you'

There was the deadlock I could not acknowledge his dual nature, and he continued to assert it He was continually trying to find some basis for a relationship

between us other than the natural one of love and marriage

'One part of my nature needs you deeply,' he would explain with moving earnestness 'For some things I cannot do without you But the other side of me wants someone else, someone different '

Such a foundation for friendship was totally unacceptable to me because I was convinced that so far as I was concerned love was a whole, a synthesis of all that I was I could not move from my standpoint, even if I had wanted to It was the fundamental me, and there was no altering it Lawrence was equally convinced of his duality, and of the two distinct kinds of 'love' The argument went on with much expenditure of emotion on both sides, over a period of years He asked me once if I was acutely aware of him sometimes, and added

'Because at times I am most acutely aware of you, and I wondered if you were aware of me at the same time It might be telepathy, you know '

He would return to the question of our relationship to one another at all sorts of odd moments, as if it were never really out of his mind During our second seaside holiday at Robin Hood's Bay, a member of the party was reading a novel called *Where the Apple Reddens*, and Lawrence, pointing to the book lying on the sitting-room table, said to me significantly

'*You* might say that '

And the following year at Flamborough, when we

were climbing the rocky path from Brunswick Bay, a little in advance of the others, he suddenly exclaimed 'There are men who would worship the ground you walk on,' and I was almost in tears, protesting I didn't want to be worshipped

Lawrence's father was with us during the Robin Hood's Bay holiday, with us, but not of us, for he found his pleasures apart I cannot recall what the occasion was, but Lawrence broke into a storm of abuse against his father (who was not present) and then flung from the room His mother bent her head with a strange smile

'He hates his father,' she said 'I know why he hates his father It happened before he was born One night he put me out of the house He's bound to hate his father '

Mrs Lawrence occupied a remarkable position in her family She ruled by a sort of divine right of motherhood, the priestess rather than the mother Her prestige was unchallenged, it would have seemed like sacrilege to question her authority I wondered often what was the secret of her power, and came to the conclusion that it lay in her unassailable belief in her own rightness

The search for some basis for a relationship went on like an undercurrent to all our activities On my twenty-first birthday Lawrence sent me a long letter in the course of which he said

'When I look at you, what I see is not the kissable and embraceable part of you, although it is so fine to look at, with the silken toss of hair curling over your ears What I see is the deep spirit within That I love and can go on loving all my life Look, you are a nun, I give you what I would give a holy nun So you must let me marry a woman I can kiss and embrace and make the mother of my children '

Then he added with prophetic insight, 'The anguish that impinges so cruelly upon you now comes only from your association with me Once you have passed out of my orbit life holds nothing but sunshine for you, of that I am convinced '

This letter seemed to strike at my very roots, certain though I was of its fundamental untruth I had no desire to be a nun My instinct was to achieve some measure of understanding of life, not to evade it Neither could I believe in his division of love into the spiritual and the physical It seemed to me entirely mistaken For divided in this manner 'physical love' became an insult, and 'spiritual love' an abstraction I felt that each was equally unreal But from this time he proceeded to develop the idea of the two kinds of love as separate and distinct He began to tell me that he could marry a girl of our acquaintance from a purely physical standpoint (This is the girl to whom he refers in the Note to the *Collected Poems* as 'the other woman, the woman of *Kisses in the Train* and *Hands of the Betrothed*' For the sake of convenience I will call

her X) The idea of such a marriage was sheer blasphemy upon all my notions of human association, but I recognized vaguely that his extreme materialism was nothing but the measure of his spiritual frustration He tried to reason it out with me

'Now I could marry X from the purely animal side '

'It's a horrible thing to do,' I replied

'Why is it horrible? Most men marry in the animal way — at least, nearly all men of intellect do You've only to look round to see '

'It's insulting to her, to split yourself in two, and offer her half like that '

'It isn't insulting to her She'd have the children Besides, she'd never know '

'Oh, wouldn't she?'

He made it clear that the 'other half' of himself belonged to me

'I give you all the best of myself You don't really want the other,' he pleaded I was bewildered

'But I don't understand,' I said 'If you are going to marry X , what do you want to keep on with me for?'

'Because I cannot do without you,' he replied with intensity 'The writing, all that side of me, belongs to you Without you I can't go on '

'Well, I don't see how we're going to do it,' I answered

'Why not?' he demanded

'Because, if you marry someone else, what is between you and me will be bound to come to an end,' I tried haltingly to explain

'Why must it come to an end?' he asked in fury

It seemed self-evident to me I could not imagine how two separate and distinct relationships, both vital, could exist simultaneously Lawrence appeared to think they could, and insisted with equal force that he and I must never marry and also that we must never part My position was difficult I was reluctant to give him the idea that simply because we might never marry I wanted to refuse the co-operation that he said was essential to his work, but I knew with absolute certainty that when he married our co-operation must inevitably come to an end The argument went on intermittently for several years

'It's like this,' he said, 'some strands of your nature are knitted with some strands of mine, and we *cannot* be parted'

Again he would say

'I can't *make* myself love you, can I? I can't plant a little love-tree in my heart'

'Of course not,' I replied 'But then why do you trouble about me? Why don't you leave me alone?'

His answer came with shattering sincerity.

'Because you are necessary to me'

Sometimes he would say in a sort of desperation

'It might be disastrous if we were to marry' And once, pathetically

'I *don't* want to make a hash of things'

Another time he said in deep earnestness

'Some part of me will *always* want you Some parts

of one's nature are always changing, but another part never changes, and that part will always want you'

In his aggressive moods he pursued the idea of marrying X — as an animal pure and simple, he said But I could never believe that he would be able to do it He was too vehement, I felt that he was trying to force himself in that direction Once when we three were together he said to her cynically

'When one can't attain to genuine love one has to make shift with the spurious'

X tittered and agreed, never suspecting its personal application

On a day in the summer of 1907 Lawrence went to her home to tea, giving me to understand that he meant to find out whether his feeling towards X was what he thought it was Some days later he handed me, with a significant glance, the poem *Snapdragon*, in which the lines

> And there in the dark I did discover
> Things I was out to find

is a literal description of the situation But although he had apparently satisfied himself as to the nature of his feeling, he took no action of any kind, but remained as suspended as before

Finally I said to him

'Very well, marry X if you want to, or anyone you like But when you are married we can have nothing to do with one another'

This distressed him deeply

'But it would be *inhuman* not to let us meet sometimes and talk,' he said I wondered if anything could be more inhuman than the situation that already existed

'Do you think X would let us? Would any wife?' I asked him

'But it takes nothing from her She has the the other side,' he pleaded

'When you are married you belong to your wife,' I told him 'Besides, I shouldn't want '

The deadlock thus complete he would turn his face to the dark fields and exclaim with the vehemence of despair, '*Nothing* matters '

I could see no way out and thought it would be best to leave home I told mother I should like to get a post away and she made no objection until she saw me filling in a form of application Then she said she could not bear the thought of my going away She began to cry and begged me to stay at home

'It's on account of Bert that you want to go away,' she said I acknowledged that it was, and she replied accusingly

'You would leave *me* because of him '

My parents never wished that Lawrence and I should marry As they put it 'Bert belongs to his mother She'll never give him up ' They appeared to accept the situation unquestioningly I told Lawrence of my attempt to leave home He listened moodily, then said, 'It's perhaps as well for you to stay I shall be going myself soon '

We still had our times of wonderful sympathy and understanding, when we left the future to take care of itself There was an afternoon when we walked out to the Misk Hills, blackberrying, in a glow of happiness I remember we decided that destiny lay within one's own nature, like the bud inside the plant Lawrence told me, too, that I could never be entirely romantic, although there was so much of the romantic in my make-up There was a residue of realism in me, he said, that would always come out The worst of a romantic nature was that it turned bitter if it failed to develop, and true to his custom of providing concrete examples to prove his theories, he mentioned someone we both knew very well as an instance of a romantic nature turned bitter Our talks were vital to our development In them we seemed to become free of a richer, intenser life Lawrence often said he could talk better to me than to anyone, and sometimes when I reminded him of something he had said, he would exclaim

'Did I really say that? I didn't think I had ever said anything so fine '

He was constantly telling me I ought to write, above all, he said, I ought to write lyrics

'You've read all the best literature, and the finest poetry in the world You've read hardly any rubbish You ought to write,' he said

'It's true, I've scarcely read any rubbish,' I replied

'It *is* true And yet you produce nothing,' he said severely

'How can I write? I've had no proper education '
I objected

'You've had a very good education,' he retorted 'You've had *me* I've been a better education to you than any academic sort'

'You've taught me almost everything I know It has been wonderful,' I acknowledged But I was unable to write I could not detach myself sufficiently from the strange impasse of our relationship to look objectively at the world around me I could only apprehend things from within, and I seemed to live in a sort of subjective trance, watching things develop

Lawrence had found a new name for me I was no longer Emily Bronte, I was a pre-Raphaelite woman I disliked the new label even more than the old one It made me feel that for him I was becoming less and less of a suffering, struggling human being, and more and more of a mental concept, a pure abstraction

One holiday afternoon a party of us, including two of my brothers and Lawrence's sister, had a picnic on the Misk Hills The weather was perfect, and we had one of those magical times when the very air seemed to radiate joy Lawrence returned home with us and when he and I were alone he began

'We've had a gorgeous time, but I wonder, are we wise to have these times together? Won't they make the ultimate parting harder? I hope you realize how things are'

This time I was not only hurt, but offended I felt,

too, that he derived a perverse pleasure from the theme I said little at the time, but when he had gone I wrote to him, telling him that he could set his mind at rest He had explained that he could not love me, and I took him at his word, and would never, never expect him to, so would he please refrain from spoiling the memory of a beautiful day by dragging out this miserable story I was sick and tired of the whole thing

I saw him some days later at the close of the College concert My brother and I had been to the concert, and the three of us came home together All the way up the hill from the station Lawrence kept asking

> 'Why did you burn your waxen man,
> Sister Helen?'

For some time I made no answer, hoping he would stop But he went on repeating, in a significant voice

> 'Why did you burn your waxen man,
> Sister Helen?
> The time was long but the time drew on,
> Sister Helen '

At last in desperation I said 'It was time to burn him ' And he replied, shuddering

> 'Oh, Mother, Mary Mother,
> What hope between hell and heaven?'

He had read Rossetti's poem to me, but I disliked its spirit of revenge For hate and revenge lay definitely outside my orbit, I had nothing to do with them.

That I should hate Lawrence was inconceivable, for I recognized his tragic predicament It was visible to me in his outward form, in an unfledged look about him, something incomplete His dilemma was real, not self-imposed, and the only helpful thing I could give him was a sympathetic hearing I said to him once

'Let it be as you like, then ' And he took me up passionately

'As I *like*? Do you think I do as I *like*? If I did as I liked '

Whatever my own lot, it was easier to bear than his, for at least I had the positive value of love, and I was not frustrated as he was by inner division For myself I had no fear, but there were moments when I saw Lawrence poised dizzily on the edge of an abyss, and I was powerless to help him There were moments, too, in our desperate struggle, when we seemed to touch another sphere of existence, and it flashed upon me that never here in this life, but somewhere beyond the human bourne lay the unity we were striving for He perhaps at times felt something similar, because he once exclaimed

'You push me beyond the very bounds of human consciousness '

One evening when Lawrence went to fetch his bicycle from the barn he told me that the brake was out of order and that he steadied himself by holding his foot on the front wheel I begged him to be careful, and when he came again he said

'It was a good thing you told me to take care There was a horse and cart nearly at the bottom of Hunt's Hill '

'Why, did your remember?' I asked in surprise

'Yes, I said to myself "She told me to be careful," so I braked with my foot If I hadn't I should have bashed into the cart '

'Why don't you get it mended? How much would it cost?'

'Half a crown But I've no money,' he replied

In my next letter I enclosed a postal order for half a crown, and asked him to get the brake mended He sent a letter of incoherent protest, but he promised to get it done.

When his College course was over and the long vacation began he brought so much of his writing to me that I had to set my studies aside for the time being But his work was of paramount interest He said several times

'I never shall be able to repay you '

That seemed to imply a kind of bargain, to me an intolerable idea, and I always replied that there was nothing to repay

'You don't owe me anything You give me as much as I give you '

'That *is* true, it *is* a mutual exchange, isn't it?' he said

Another evening, in the parlour where so much of our talking and study was done, he said slowly

'You, more than anyone I know, are capable of living a full life'

My heart burned, for I knew his words were true, but my opportunities were meagre, save through him

When he had to leave us to take up his post in Croydon he looked like a man under sentence of exile I saw his mother

'What shall *I* do when he's gone?' she moaned Then she burst out in a sudden odd fierceness

'And where would he have been without me to call him up in a morning, and have his porridge and everything ready for him? He'd never have got off to College every day if I hadn't seen to things'

It struck me as incongruous that his mother should make much of these homely services But I do not think she saw him, or even wanted to see him, as a man of genius It would remove him too far from her. What she saw was the loving and dutiful son she could claim and keep, and share the day to day joys and sorrows with They were in close communion, swiftly responsive to one another 'The Little Woman,' Lawrence used to call her playfully She knew that he had outstanding abilities and was inordinately proud of him His going away would leave her days empty and colourless

He came to say good-bye to us He was pale and his eyes looked dark with pain

'Well, Bert, you're going to leave us then,' father said, and much feeling lay behind the casual words

'It looks like it,' Lawrence replied in the same way

He set off for home soon after supper I walked with him to the last gate, where we stopped He leaned towards me

'*La dernière fois*,' he said, inclining his head towards the farm and the wood I burst into tears, and he put his arms round me He kissed me and stroked my cheek, murmuring

'I'm so sorry, so sorry, so sorry '

His words scalded me I drew away and dried my tears

'I'm so sorry for this,' he said again in a deadened voice 'But it can't be helped, it can't be helped '

'Never mind,' I said, 'it doesn't matter '

We stood for some minutes seeing the familiar outlines of the landscape in the dim October evening It was all utterly hopeless, there was no use beginning the old argument again Presently he said

'Mother and A are having a few people to tea to-morrow Come as well, if you like '

'I'll see,' I answered, and he got on his bicycle and rode away I understood the nature of his invitation It meant, 'Come if you can bear to', for it was now impossible to ignore the fixed hostility towards me As he had said long ago, he never took sides, at least he never took my side I tried hard to stay away, but as the time approached some power stronger than my own will compelled me to go So I filled a small basket with the rosiest of our apples and made that my excuse It was not a gay party, Lawrence looked white and

wretched I came home early, in deep humiliation I knew my malady, but years were to pass before I found it adequately described

> His folly hath not fellow
> Beneath the blue of day
> That gives to man or woman
> His heart and soul away

On his second day in Croydon Lawrence sent me a letter that gave me a shock It was like a howl of terror People were kind, he said, but everything was strange, and how could he live away from us all? He dreaded morning and school with the anguish of a sick girl Finally he said he felt afraid for himself, cut off from us all he would grow into something black and ugly, like some loathsome bird In a postscript he told me not to say anything of this to his mother, he had written to her that everything was all right and he was getting on well I burned his letter immediately lest anyone should see it I had known that it hurt him to leave us, but I came nowhere near to guessing how much

The phase of acute homesickness soon wore off He settled down to the third writing of *The White Peacock*, and began to explore London, and to write about the lights that flowered when darkness came At Christmas he came home for a fortnight's holiday, and told us how tiny were the rooms of the house he lived in But he liked the people They were homely Lancashire people with two children, one a baby only

a few months old He told us that sometimes only he could get her to sleep at night, by singing his favourite ballad of *Henry Martin* I remarked to his mother how fond he was of the baby, and she replied austerely

'Yes, I was glad when I knew there was a baby It will keep him pure '

We had no uproarious charades that Christmas, the spirit was lacking One evening of the holiday Lawrence and my mother were talking about the historic landmarks of Nottingham, and Lawrence, glancing at me, said we would make up a party some day and discover what remained of old Nottingham

He wrote to me almost every week from Croydon, about himself and his writing and school, just as he had been in the habit of talking In one letter he said

'You — the anvil on which I have hammered myself out '

Only twice in all our long association did Lawrence speak to me directly of sex, and each time he asked me if I minded During a holiday walk he suddenly said

'Do you *mind* if I talk to you about sex?'

'I don't think so,' I replied

'Because Chesterton says that the man who talks about sex to a woman is a brute Do you agree with him?'

'Why surely, it's the other way about,' I said 'The man who can't speak properly to a woman about sex is the brute '

'That's what I think,' he replied Then he went on

to tell me that some men, commercial travellers probably, had been talking in the train

'If you had heard them, you'd have had to rush away,' he said He never told me what it was he had heard, but it seemed to have bruised his consciousness, and he wanted to tell me about it for the sake of relief

On the second occasion he began by saying

'We are agreed that Chesterton is the brute, and I can talk to you about sex ' But I cannot recall with any clearness what he said further As far as I can recollect he seemed to be claiming for himself the right to know all about the 'worldly' attitude to sex, while I should remain in comparative ignorance

'I *must* know about those things,' he said, 'but why should you want to?'

'I don't want to They don't interest me,' I told him

I could not help feeling that the whole question of sex had for him the fascination of horror, and also that in his repudiation of any possibility of a sex relation between us he felt that he paid me a deep and subtle compliment I was sure there was something fundamentally false in this attitude, because of my inescapable conviction that one must accept life as a whole

The old argument went on There was a sunny afternoon on the Annesley Hills when Lawrence tried his utmost to persuade me that love and marriage could have no part in my life I made a passionate protest

'This life here is all we know,' I said, 'like a spell of

daylight between two eternities How can I ever live completely if I shut out one half of life?'

There were contradictory elements too, and times when he would say

'Things will come right in the end I am always hoping things will come all right'

Then the theme of a 'physical' marriage with X would crop up again I have a clear recollection of Lawrence coming to me one afternoon in our long whitewashed dairy, where I was busy upon some task, and telling me in a low voice that he had definitely come to the conclusion he must marry X A sense of horror came over me, and I said bitterly

'Then all that has been, all that we are to one another will be wiped out, like rubbing writing off a slate'

'Nothing need be rubbed off, but the other thing, it *has* to be,' he hissed My new bicycle was leaning against the wall, and the bright steel hurt me like a blow I suddenly thought

'Life is rich indeed if it gives you a second time what I have to give'

Soon afterwards Lawrence wrote to me that X was to spend a week-end in Croydon, staying as a guest of the family with whom he lodged, as his sister, and myself, and other friends had done In his letter the following week he said, 'X was here for the week-end, but it's no good Somehow as soon as I am alone with her I want to run away' And the project was mentioned no more

VI

LITERARY DÉBUT

LAWRENCE and I first talked about the publication of his work, so far as I remember, on a cold evening in the spring of 1908, when he had been bringing his writings to me for two years It was nearly the end of his last term in College and there was the sense of an impending break and a new point of departure He was in one of his still, indrawn moods, he had been going to the dentist and was feeling a little out of sorts The sky was a leaden colour and the green of the wood and fields showed intense in the dull light He was telling me in a quiet and deliberately unexpressive voice that he had sent some of his work to an author, whose weekly article in the *Daily News* we often read and discussed, asking him if he would give his opinion as to its merit I had not heard of this before and I cannot be sure whether the work in question was a story or an essay, but I am inclined to think it was the latter Some weeks or even months had passed since he sent it, and now he was telling me that the author's wife had returned the manuscript, saying that her husband regretted his inability to give an opinion, owing to pressure of work

'So evidently,' said Lawrence, 'his wife acts as his amanuensis '

I recognized only too well the chagrin that lay behind his casual words I murmured something sympathetic and Lawrence continued in the same flat voice

'I've tried, and been turned down, and I shall try no more And I don't care if I never have a line published,' he concluded in a tone of finality I said nothing, knowing it was futile to argue with him in his present mood But I began to wonder what would become of him if he should fail to get a hearing

We never referred to the incident again Lawrence continued to bring, and when he left home to send his writings to me poems frequently, and always the novel which ultimately became *The White Peacock* It was at Christmas of this year on his first holiday from Croydon that he showed us the *English Review* for December, 1908 We were delighted with the journal The very look of it, with its fine blue cover and handsome black type, was satisfying Father thoroughly appreciated it, and we decided to subscribe to it amongst us The coming of the *English Review* into our lives was an event, one of the few really first-rate things that happen now and again in a lifetime I remember what a joy it was to get the solid, handsome journal from our local newsagent, and feel it was a link with the world of literature I soon noticed that the Editor was prepared to welcome new talent I drew Lawrence's attention

to this and begged him to submit some of his work, but he refused absolutely I asked what was to become of his writing if he made no attempt to place any of it

'I don't care what becomes of it,' he said stubbornly 'I'm not anxious to get into print I shan't send anything Besides they'd never take it '

'How do you know unless you try?' I persisted, and he suddenly said

'*You* send something Send some of the poems, if you like '

'Very well, which shall I send?'

'Send whatever you like Do what you like with them,' he answered Then, seeing I was in earnest, he added 'Give me a *nom de plume*, though, I don't want folk in Croydon to know I write poetry ' And he would say nothing more

I looked through the poems Lawrence had sent in letters to me since he left home, picked out what I thought were the best, and copied them out one beautiful June morning I was careful to put the poem called 'Discipline' first, not because I thought it was the best, but hoping that the unusual title might attract the Editor's attention In 'Dreams Old and Nascent' I knew he was trying to explain himself to me, and 'Baby Movements' I sent because I loved it It was about the baby in the family with whom he lived in Croydon He was very fond of her and often spoke about her in letters I enclosed also several other poems whose titles I don't remember I wrote a letter

to the Editor of the *English Review* saying that the author of the poems was a young man who had been writing for a number of years, and who would be very grateful for any recognition I gave his name, of course, but said that if any of the poems were printed they should appear under the *nom de plume* of Richard Greasley (Richards was an unacknowledged name of Lawrence's, and Greasley was his home parish) The next time I saw Lawrence he said

'Did you send those poems to the *English*?' adding immediately, 'They'll never print them '

The reply came in August when the Lawrences were on holiday at Shanklin in the Isle of Wight It said, as nearly as I can remember, that the poems were very interesting and that the author had undoubted talent, but that nowadays luck played such a large part in a literary career, and continued, 'If you would get him to come and see me some time when he is in London perhaps something might be done ' The letter was signed Ford Madox Hueffer, a name that I knew only in connection with the first instalment of the serial story, *A Call*, in the current number of the *English Review* I replied that Mr Lawrence was away at the moment, but when school re-opened I was sure he would be glad to call on Mr Hueffer

Lawrence wrote to me from Shanklin, a long descriptive letter about the island and the fun they all had bathing, but I kept my news until he returned When we were alone together I said

'Oh, I've got a letter for you '

He looked at me quickly, then his eyes narrowed

'From the *English*? About the poems? Show it me '

I gave him the letter, and his face became tense

'*You* are my luck,' he murmured Then he said with suppressed excitement, 'Let me take it to show mother ' And I never saw it again

In our talks that holiday Lawrence told me that his mother and sister were not pleased with him He was changing, they said, and breaking away from the old things, and they hated him to be different from what he used to be He felt it was hard and narrow on their part He had to change, and leave the old things, but he thought they might go on liking him just the same

As I had not been away for a holiday I reminded Lawrence of the project for making up a party and visiting the historic remains of Nottingham He looked worried for a moment, but said he would like it, adding, 'The others probably won't want to, so if we go *à deux*, we go *à deux* ' It was arranged that the party (if there was one) should meet at his home When I called Lawrence was not ready, and his sister was nowhere to be seen I asked Mrs Lawrence if A was to accompany us, and she replied shortly that she was not I thought Mrs Lawrence might make some reference to Hueffer's letter, but she said nothing I seemed to be in disgrace At the time I could not

understand why, and I can only surmise that Lawrence in self-defence told his mother I had sent the poems without his knowledge, so that in her eyes I was guilty of unwarrantable interference in his affairs Whatever the reason, the atmosphere suggested an imminent thunderstorm I tried to take no notice and went on talking, only to feel the air grow more oppressive We set off finally with the distinct sense of a rod in pickle, for either or both of us

As was usual when the home atmosphere was disturbed in this way, Lawrence took refuge in an arrogance which I felt to be a mask for his own wretchedness I tried not to be affected by it, but after a time my spirit flagged and I became a mere bundle of misery It was the same at the café where we had tea Lawrence's precise and distant manner withered my attempts at conversation Afterwards he strode along to one of the picturesque old shops near the Castle, where he bought some photographs of Greek statuary One was 'Amor et Psyche', which he said ominously was for me The remainder of the evening is a blank in my memory, but we must have been to a theatre, because it was late when we went home I was to stay with my sister (who was now married) and on the walk from the station Lawrence poured out his accumulated spleen It was the old story There could never, *never* be anything between us but an association of the mind and the spirit I was Psyche, I was the soul, and I had no other significance for him But it was uttered with

the dehumanized vehemence that was so devastating At the gate he held out the picture of 'Amor et Psyche'

'Take it,' he said, 'it is you You are Psyche, you are the soul, and I leave you, as I *must*' He gazed at me for a moment with a face set in agony, then turned on his heel and began to stamp his way homeward I felt terror-stricken, for both of us, but more for him I ran for some steps after him and called, but his heel rang on the pavement so that it was impossible for him to hear me I went back to the cottage

In the morning I felt too ill to go home My sister mercifully asked no questions, and later in the day we returned together I learned afterwards that Lawrence arrived at the cottage soon after we had gone, and badly wanted to start in pursuit of us He was assured that he could not overtake us, and remained hanging about, moody and silent

On the following day I was myself again I decided that to continue in this way was sheer waste of life So I cycled into Nottingham and called at the Education Offices, asking to be placed in a school in the town so that I could study in the evenings at the University

I was sitting over a late tea when Lawrence walked into the kitchen In the town I had bought Arnold Bennett's *A Great Man*, and was reading it with huge enjoyment I glanced up and gave him a casual greeting He replied stiffly and sat down on the sofa, facing me I resumed my reading My brother got ready and went out to meet his fiancée I could feel Lawrence

getting more and more rigid, and said to him laughingly

'You don't mind my going on reading, do you? This is really funny '

'Not at all,' he replied I returned to my book, but after a while Lawrence's misery began to invade me, as it always did

'I shall have to go soon,' he said in a quiet voice 'I didn't bring a lamp '

'You can borrow mine,' I rejoined, and began to read again He made a movement to go

'Are you in a hurry?' I asked

'Not particularly,' he replied, miserably

'Well, I'll make some coffee soon ' Something seemed to reach father behind his newspaper

'You may as well have a bit of supper while you're here,' he said

I made coffee and told Lawrence what I had done in Nottingham, and the misery went out of his face Presently I fetched the lamp from my bicycle

'Walk a little way with me, there won't be another chance,' he said It was a perfect night, and I walked with him along the high road and down Hunt's hill At the field path I stopped

'You *might* come a bit further,' he pleaded 'You know there'll be an awful row if I'm late, but nobody will say a word to you '

I walked on, carrying the bicycle lamp in my hand We talked of one thing and another, but as all paths

lead to Rome, our conversation inevitably led back to the theme, which seemed to have become an obsession with him, of how and whom he should marry Each time I stopped to turn back he begged me to go a little further Finally, when I had walked nearly as far as his home, he said desperately

'It isn't that that I don't want to marry I'd marry to-morrow, if I could only find someone I *could* marry I'd marry *you* if only I could As I am at present I shall go from woman to woman until I am satisfied ' I looked at him in horror and compassion He was so clearly in the grip of a tension he could not control, that seemed to pull him in opposite directions with equal force I could say nothing, and left him I crossed the field path in the soft starlight, and when I had passed through the Warren and come into our own fields I stayed for a long time watching the stars and listening to the silence It was midnight when I went to the house My brother had just bolted the door He was astonished to see me there with the bicycle lamp in my hand

Lawrence went to see Ford Madox Hueffer in September and wrote to me ' He is fairish, fat, about forty, and the kindest man on earth ' Hueffer introduced him to various literary and artistic people, and meeting them excited and tired him very much He wrote

'Last night I dined with celebrities, and to-night I am dining with two R A s, but I'd give it all up for

one of our old evenings in the Haggs parlour' Some of the poems I had sent were to be published in the November number of the *English Review* Hueffer interested himself also in Lawrence's novel

In a later letter he said

'It is snowing, and I ought to be out on Wimbledon Common with a girl, a teacher here I have almost made up my mind to marry her as soon as I get some money I think I shall I am almost sure I shall'

In a further letter he told me that his sister complained that he went about too much and did not send money home 'But then,' he wrote, 'I am in digs I can't hang about the house as if I were at home'

Soon after the meeting with Hueffer, Lawrence began begging me to go and see him in London He had so much to tell me and to show me He had written a play, and there were poems it was 'too much fag' to copy out He also wanted me to meet the girl he had almost decided to marry With the memory of our last outing still fresh in my mind, I told him I didn't want to go But he became urgent, and at last I promised to go at the end of November Lawrence met me at King's Cross and as soon as we were seated on the top of a bus, he told me that Hueffer had made him promise to take me to see him when I came to London My heart sank, for I dreaded meeting strangers

'I told him,' said Lawrence, 'I must get you here in London before I let you know, or you'd never come.'

'I never would,' I replied, 'but of course I'll go now I'm here '

I banished all thought of it, lest it should cast a shadow on the day Lawrence was in a genial mood, and London was a place of wonder He took me first to see the big shops, and I felt how trivial was all the wealth they displayed compared with the joy of being with him We had lunch at Selfridge's and Lawrence sent a postcard to his possible fiancée telling her that he would take me to see her in the morning

'Will she really like to see me?' I asked

'Oh yes, she's keen on seeing you,' he answered 'She thought herself great shakes until she met me and heard about you '

'Why, what has she done?'

'Well, her mother's an awful tyrant of the strict Sabbatarian variety, so she left home and struck out for herself '

From Selfridge's we went to the National Gallery, and when night came on he took me to Waterloo Bridge and made me look at the human wreckage preparing to spend the night on the Embankment He wanted me to see the bridges at night, with the lights of the trams reflected, as he had described them in his poems Finally we went to a theatre, and in the steep gallery, sitting between Lawrence and a negro, I watched a play called *The Making of a Gentleman* The negro was so still, I wondered what he thought of it Lawrence explained to me that the theatre existed

mainly in the interests of fashion, and that the leaders of Society came not for the play (which was obviously rubbish) but to observe the varied and beautiful dresses worn by the leading ladies

When we reached his lodgings the family had gone to bed Once inside the house Lawrence glowed As he was hanging up my things I asked him if he liked my hat, and he replied

'It's the very blue I've always so admired '

He took a saucepan from the hearth

'I'm awfully sorry, it's macaroni again,' he said We had had macaroni at lunch But it didn't matter We could have banqueted on a crust Supper over, he cleared the table and began to show me his writings There were poems, quite a number that I had not seen, and a play that was about his home on a Friday night Sitting there in the tiny suburban room, it troubled me deeply to see his home put before me in his vivid phrases He was watching me keenly

'Do you like it?' he asked

'It's very true But let me take it home I can't read properly here ' He swept the papers together

'Now we'll talk,' he said 'But perhaps you want to go to bed?' It was one o'clock I had left home at six the morning before 'Can you stay up a little longer? Can you give me one hour?' he asked

'Yes, I can stay another hour,' I answered

Then he began to ask me very earnestly — What did I expect from life, what did I hope for in the future?

I bent my head and the tears ran down into my lap, because in my heart was no hope at all, but only fortitude So I said

'I don't know I can't tell I don't hope for anything much But I shall get along somehow I'm not afraid '

He looked hard at me, thinking deeply Then he began to tell me what a terrible strain he found the new life, the excitement, and the meeting with such different people He said how hard it was to bear the stress of life alone, and how much he needed to be married He said softly

'You know, I could so easily peg out ' In my mind I saw a candle puffed out in a gust of wind

'Well,' I said, not entirely without irony, 'you have only to make a choice '

'Have I?' he asked, and sat thinking 'But I've no money,' he went on 'I shan't be able to marry for ever so long I think I shall ask some girl if she will give me that without marriage Do you think any girl would?'

'I don't know,' I answered 'The kind of girl who would, I think you wouldn't like '

'Would you think it wrong?'

'No, I wouldn't think it wrong But all the girls I know would '

'But *you* wouldn't?' he insisted

'Not *wrong* But it would be very difficult '

He seemed to hang upon my words Compassion

for him brought to my mind 'Whoso giveth a cup of cold water in My name ' After a pause he said

'Well, I think I shall ask *her* Do you think she would?'

'It depends how much she is in love with you,' I replied He sat deep in thought I reminded him of the time

'Look, Bert, it's two o'clock I really am tired now '

'It's two o'clock,' he repeated, 'it's two o'clock *Must* you go to bed?'

'Yes, I must go now,' I said, getting up from my chair

'Very well I'll let you go You shall go,' he said

In the morning we went to see his friend She was tall, with grey eyes and auburn hair She was pleasant—and a school-mistress She talked to Lawrence rather like an elder sister, and there was about him the curious air of bravado that I always felt arose from lack of conviction I could only marvel at the inscrutable ruling of fate She greeted me warmly and pinned a spray of red berries in my coat Lawrence made an assignation with her and we took our leave

We were to go first to Hueffer's flat in Holland Park, and then to Violet Hunt's house in Kensington to lunch With the spectacle of London's opulence before us Lawrence exclaimed

'I'll make two thousand a year!'

'Will you?' I said indifferently I didn't care whether he made two thousand pounds or two thousand pence I had never imagined Lawrence making money I thought he would aim at something finer and more original The name Holland Park suggested a Dutch atmosphere and open space and trees, so I felt slightly bewildered to find only streets and houses In the flat there were piles of the *English Review* lying on the black polished floor and on the window-seat Lawrence told me that Hueffer was very fond of this flat and said he felt a sense of satisfaction every time he entered it

'I can't say I should,' said Lawrence critically He nodded towards a photograph on the mantelpiece 'Violet Hunt', he whispered At that moment Hueffer came into the room I looked up at him, intent on seeing what manner of man he was who was going to make such a difference in Lawrence's life, but his own penetrating gaze made me drop my eyes For some moments he stood smiling down at me and chatting It was not until he said, indicating the portrait of a small boy hanging over the mantelpiece, 'That is a portrait of me as a little boy, painted by my grandfather,' that I was able to look up again I glanced at the portrait of the chubby, rosy-cheeked boy, and at Hueffer and said I liked it, but the thought that flashed through my mind was, 'Ah — you were fat even as a child ' Hueffer smiled at me, and Lawrence gave a short, half-derisive laugh Here Hueffer un-

pinned a paper and showed me an announcement of a Suffragette meeting

'I suppose you're interested in that,' he said

'Oh, yes, I've a very enthusiastic friend who tells me all about it,' I replied Then a little later he said

'You're a sort of Socialist, I suppose?'

Not a single political idea had crossed my mind in those days, but I liked the pleasant ambiguity of his definition and decided there and then that it described me exactly He told me he had two votes, but had never voted once, and never would, until women also were able to vote This sounded like knight-errantry I thought

We set off to walk to the house in Kensington, and I remarked how strange it was that a place never looked as one expected it would

'How did you expect it would look?' Hueffer asked in an eager voice

I was suddenly self-conscious and murmured that I could never have imagined an avenue without trees I was shy, but not so shy as to be insensible to the charm with which Hueffer was talking to me I suppose never before or since has anyone talked to me with quite such charm, making me feel in the most delicate way that what I said was of interest I found myself telling him that I lived not even in a village, but at an isolated farm behind a wood He answered that to him that part of London always seemed like a village, because he had watched it grow from a village

since his boyhood I told him about the autumn shooting parties in the wood, and how afterwards the gamekeepers would bring us a brace of pheasants and partridges, and perhaps a hare

So by the time we arrived at our destination I had completely got over my shyness, and was entering into the situation and enjoying it Hueffer's pleasant manner in addressing the maid-servant who opened the door to us was not lost on me It confirmed my impression of genuine kindliness The maid took me upstairs to what was evidently her mistress's study where I left my outdoor things Then she conducted me to the drawing-room and announced me under a wrong name

Violet Hunt greeted me cordially Lawrence had warned me that she would perhaps not shake hands — people in that sphere of society sometimes didn't, he said — but she shook hands with me and introduced me to the other people in the room her mother — an old, old lady — and a young American poet who startled me by springing to his feet and bowing from the waist with the stiff precision of a mechanical toy There was also a quiet man named Byles, who had joined us on the way, and who bowed to me, smiling, from his chair

At lunch I sat between the American poet and Mr Byles, with Hueffer and Lawrence opposite, and the two ladies at either end of the table I noted the excellent cooking — how the gravy ran down into the

dish when Violet Hunt carved the joint, and brussel sprouts I never had seen so perfectly cooked — each one sound and whole Our hostess told us that the plum pudding was one from the Christmas before, and I thoroughly enjoyed the simple, homely fare

The young American poet was the life of the party He flung out observations in an abrupt way that reminded me of his poetry

'Why do you give us solid stuff like roast beef and plum pudding for lunch?' And later, 'Shall I show you how an American eats an apple?'

He speared an apple with his knife, chopped it into quarters and gobbled it ostentatiously I regarded him as an amiable buffoon Hueffer remarked to me that Mr Byles had once lived on a small holding, but it was obvious to me that he had never had to depend upon a small holding for his living—he was too suave and urbane

Somebody mentioned Carlyle and Ruskin, and Lawrence admitted that he had read them both

'You're the only man I've ever met,' said Hueffer, 'who really has read all those people '

We said we had seen Galsworthy's *Strife* in the theatre at Nottingham Hueffer asked me if I liked it He looked sceptical when I said I did Religion was mentioned, and Lawrence remarked that we had both been brought up as Congregationalists Mr Byles said he, too, was a Congregationalist, whereupon Hueffer smiled and said that all the nice young people he knew nowadays seemed to be Congregationalists

The talk turned to the Suffragettes Violet Hunt told us that such things were done to the women who were taken to prison as they wouldn't even tell their friends A favourite form of torture was to hold a lighted match inside the hand When prison was mentioned the young poet looked round and said that for his part he had never in his life been inside a room that reminded him more of a prison than the one he was in at the moment

I suddenly felt tired and wished it was time to go I looked at Lawrence sitting so straight and alert, and thought that this was perhaps the last of our days together A wave of melancholy swept over me I could see so well the wonderful man he might be if only the deep reserves in his nature could be truly liberated The conversation pattered around me like raindrops, and at last the interminable meal came to an end

In the drawing-room Violet Hunt said she thought she had seen my handwriting — hadn't I sent some poems of Lawrence's to the *English Review*? I said I had, and how delighted we were to have Mr Hueffer's reply Then she exclaimed

'But you *discovered* him ' To which I replied that we had been acquainted with one another ever since we were hardly more than children

Presently the gentlemen came in The American poet continued to rattle off his questions like a succession of squibs Finally he put a question to Hueffer that electrified me

'How would *you* speak to a working man?' he asked 'Would you speak to him just the same as to any other man, or would you make a difference?' I nearly held my breath for the answer Perhaps Hueffer found my gaze embarrassing, because he hesitated a moment and glanced at me before he said

'I should speak to a working man in exactly the same way that I should speak to any other man, because I don't think there is any difference '

I don't know whether my face glowed, but I certainly was aglow inside, because I felt he was sincere Yet more than ever I longed to go When someone asked what time it was, I took the opportunity of saying that I must be at King's Cross at four Soon we all rose, and Violet Hunt took me into her study to put my things on She was extremely kind She said that Mr Hueffer would do all he could for Lawrence, and they would both talk about his novel to their friends

I felt uncomfortable in what I saw was a false situation Violet Hunt and Hueffer obviously looked upon Lawrence and me as at least a virtually engaged couple When she commented upon the red berries in my coat I told her that a lady friend of Mr Lawrence's had pinned them there It was on the tip of my tongue to say 'She is the lady Mr Lawrence thinks he may marry '

Hueffer walked along with Lawrence and me for quite a distance

'Why don't you come and teach in London?' he asked me Lawrence explained that the London education authorities preferred to employ their own teachers He had shown Hueffer a little sketch of mine Hueffer liked it, and asked me what else I was doing He told me I wrote nicely, but must be careful to keep off highfalutin, which was damnable Then he suggested I should write something about myself, and Lawrence put in

'It wouldn't be any good She's incommunicable '

Hueffer looked at me and laughed

'There you are, you see, labelled, put away on the shelf, and done with ' He advised me to go on writing and send anything I did to him, and he might be able to help me His kindliness impressed me and I thanked him sincerely Indeed, whenever I recollect that leisurely Sunday afternoon walk through the grey November murk — with Lawrence almost skipping to accommodate his impatient steps to our slow ones — I feel again the genial warmth of Hueffer's personality

When he had left us Lawrence exclaimed in a sort of nervous exasperation

'Isn't he fat, and doesn't he walk *slow*! He says he walks about London two hours every day to keep his fat down But he won't keep much down if he always walks at that pace '

I replied that he was wonderfully kind

'Oh, he's kind, he's *kind*,' Lawrence agreed Then he suddenly asked me how I liked having champagne

with my lunch I said I didn't know it was champagne, but that anyhow I liked it Then he said

'Did you hear where Hueffer said he was going next?' [This was in answer to a question from Violet Hunt] 'He was going to see Lady ——,' Lawrence continued with a significant glance It seemed extraordinary to me that a man with his gifts should care about the kind of 'distinction' that titles confer He knew how I felt On an earlier occasion he had said

'How that glittering taketh me,' was true of himself

'Does it?' I had replied 'I'm afraid it doesn't take me '

'I know,' and he hung his head 'But it does me '

My train went in a few minutes Lawrence raced along the platform for my rug Then he said

'If you are going down to Eastwood in the week, you might call and tell mother about it She'll like to hear how we went on '

I promised I would He gave me his play to read, and stood close to the carriage window until the train began to move Suddenly I saw that he was deeply agitated

I went to see Lawrence's mother one evening She listened with a supercilious air while I told her briefly about the meeting with Hueffer and Violet Hunt When I had finished she said almost genially

'Well, it would be very interesting '

I asked her if she liked the poems that had been published in the *English Review*

'Yes, I did like them,' she answered, still slightly on the defensive 'I thought they were heaps better than that by John Lazerus'

'And did you like Hueffer's story *A Call*?'

'I did But I wondered how he was going to end it' Then she said significantly, 'When two women are both in love with the same man, one of them usually has to be disappointed'

She looked into my face searchingly I knew what she meant, but I returned her gaze with unflinching candour, and replied as if casually, 'It is so In a case like that someone usually is disappointed' She held my eyes for a moment, searching for a clue, then turned away baffled

I had only one care, that no one should guess I was hurt It was a comfort to remember that changes were afoot I was going to teach in a big town school in the New Year My family also was leaving the farm and going to one nearer the town I was glad to be leaving the valley, that I had completely outgrown, and almost come to hate I expected that Lawrence would marry the auburn-haired teacher, and tried to accustom myself to the idea He had said to me many times, vehemently

'It doesn't matter *who* one marries'

VII

'SONS AND LOVERS'

THE Christmas of 1910 provided the greatest possible contrast to the Christmas of the year before It was hard to believe that such a complete change could come about within the space of a single year Life then was rich with promise, and opening out to wonderful possibilities Lawrence's poems had been published in the *English Review* and his novel, *The White Peacock*, the writing of which had served as his apprenticeship to the craft of literature, was receiving sympathetic consideration He told us, knowing how we should appreciate the valuation, that some of the descriptions of nature were considered equal to those in Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*

A new and immensely larger life was opening out before him A kind of transfiguration from obscurity and uncertainty had taken place Thanks to the kind offices of Ford Madox Hueffer his chance of a hearing was assured And it had all come about so simply, almost without effort There was a glamour about those days, even something of a glitter It made me feel dizzy, as though the foundations that had always seemed so firm were rocking slightly A faint atmosphere of unreality suggested to me that I was indeed

the Lady of Shalott as Lawrence liked to hint I was, and saw only the reflection of things in a mirror

It was at Christmas, 1909, that he made the great attempt to resolve the conflict in himself Soon after my return from London he sent me the verse 'Aware', but I had always been careful not to take his poems too literally Now he came to me and told me that he had been mistaken all these years, that he must have loved me all along without knowing it The idea of marrying the Croydon teacher was a mistake He had told her so, he said, and everything was over between them, and in fact she left Croydon shortly afterwards, and passed out of his life The years of our friendship had been simply a preparation for this, he said, and he hadn't known before But we wouldn't speak of it to anyone yet They would make such a fuss and ask so many questions It should be our secret for the present We would go our own way and say nothing to anyone for a while

In spite of myself I heard the old forced note, the need to convince himself But I felt how sincere was his desire to be convinced And on my side was the bond of love, and the long loyalty

That was the Christmas of 1909 When Christmas came round again that world was shattered We had lived through a year of successive crises, of which the culminating one was the death of Lawrence's mother

The early months of the year were spent in the final revision of *The White Peacock*, which was finished in a

rare sunny mood Asking me to help him to find a title (for the story had hitherto been called 'Nethermere'), Lawrence wrote 'I have always believed it was the woman who paid the price in life But I've made a discovery It's the man who pays, not the woman'

On a day in the Easter holiday he said to me 'I thought you would be sure to write some day, but now I begin to ha'e ma doots You have a *wonderful* sympathy, and perhaps that's your gift I think God intended you to make a *good* wife — and not much more Do you mind?'

I replied that I was well content

Towards the end of the the same holiday he was planning his next novel He told me he would write a 'bright' story, and take one of my brothers (the Maurice of *Love Among the Haystacks*) as hero Almost immediately on returning to Croydon he wrote, apparently very much disturbed, saying that he found he had to write the story of Siegmund It was in front of him and he had got to do it He begged me to go to Croydon and make the acquaintance of 'Helen'

His second novel, *The Trespasser*, was written in feverish haste between the Whitsuntide and Midsummer of 1910 Lawrence implored me not to attempt to hold him He told me most impressively the story of the Shirt of Nessus Something of that kind, he said, something fatal, perhaps, might happen

if I insisted on holding him 'For this I need Helen, but I must *always* return to you,' he said earnestly, 'only you must always leave me free '

When the August holiday came Lawrence suggested that he should spend some days with our family at the new farm, which he had scarcely seen, and we prepared a room for him He went home first, however, and when I met him several days later, instead of returning with me as he had planned to do, he broke off our engagement completely He had returned, overnight as it were, to his old attitude Letters arrived at the farm for him during the week, so the change of mood must have occurred after he left Croydon

I stood, as always, for complete union or a complete break I could not move from my old standpoint of all or nothing, even when Lawrence said 'Then I am afraid it must be nothing ' We agreed not even to correspond Within a week there came an importunate note from him

'*Do* read Barrie's *Sentimental Tommy* and *Tommy and Grizel* I've just had them out of the library here They'll help you to understand how it is with me I'm in exactly the same predicament '

Before the holiday was over I had a pathetic message, telling me of his mother's illness, that was to prove fatal

The autumn of his mother's dying imposed a terrible strain upon Lawrence He was never the same man again He came home on alternate week-ends to be

with her I saw him several times, and although he was superficially interested in things one could not help feeling how terribly alone he was in his grief Love was unavailing, no matter how sincere or how selfless In his presence one felt only the horror of sheer hopelessness His mother's death completed the break-up of the old life, that had proved so rich in experience and achievement

A fortnight or so before his mother's death I had occasion to call at the village post office and a letter from Lawrence was handed to me In the dim light I read 'I was in the train with X on Saturday and I suddenly asked her to marry me I never meant to But she accepted me and I shall stick to it I've written to her father I'll go over the old ground again, if you like, and explain Do you want me to say little, or nothing, or much? I'll say anything you like, only I can't help it, I'm made this way'

Lawrence was with his mother when she died He sent word to me, and on a Sunday morning, the day before her funeral, we met and walked once more on the familiar lanes As we passed the reservoir a beggar whined for alms Lawrence brutally tossed a coin to him, and the man grovelled for it in the dust I looked at Lawrence in anger, and he answered

'Yes, a man has sunk pretty low when he can take a copper in that fashion'

I told him he had done wrong to involve X in the

impasse of our relationship 'You should not have drawn X into things,' I said 'She has no idea of the real state of affairs '

'With *should* and *ought* I have nothing to do,' Lawrence replied coldly We walked on in anguish of spirit At the railway track leading down to the pits we remained standing a long time We seemed to be completely shut in by the grey December day, quite removed from the world of human contact Suddenly out of the gloom a collier appeared on his way to work He had a red scarf round his neck and a tea-can was sticking out of his pocket He looked at us with startled eyes Lawrence glanced at him as he passed

'There you are,' he said, 'A story by Chekhov — "The Man in the Red Muffler" '

We waited some time longer, then Lawrence looked at me with intensity 'You know — I've always loved mother,' he said in a strangled voice

'I know you have,' I replied

'I don't mean that,' he returned quickly 'I've *loved* her, like a lover That's why I could never love you '

With that he silently gave me a draft of the poems he had just written 'The End', 'The Bride', 'The Virgin Mother'

After his mother's death Lawrence was like a rudderless ship — 'a leaf blown in the wind' — was his favourite simile for himself

Throughout the following year I saw him on fewer

occasions than I could count on the fingers of one hand, but he begged me to write to him

'Write to me whenever you feel like it,' he urged in a letter 'Don't wait for it to be your turn, but write whenever you feel you have something to say'

Early in the year I had a letter in which he said 'I am not strong like you You can fight your battle and have done with it, but I *have* to run away, or I couldn't bear things I have to fight a bit, and then run away, and then fight a bit more So I really do go on fighting, only it has to be at intervals At times I am afflicted by a perversity amounting to minor insanity But the best man in me belongs to you One me is yours, a fine, strong me I have great faith still that things will come right in the end'

This was during the year of his engagement to X

The situation was simply that his mother had claimed his love, all the spontaneous tenderness without which 'love' is a mockery And having given it to her fully and unreservedly Lawrence had in truth no love to give anyone else, so that his agonized reiteration of his inability to love me was nothing but a bare statement of fact It was the ineluctable position in which he found himself

It was difficult to understand this, in those days, but it was what Lawrence meant when he offered to 'go over the ground again and explain' The incredible thing was the exclusiveness, and the incapacitating nature of the mother-love

I could not bring myself to believe that the situation was irreparable I wanted to make the effect of his mother's attitude clear to him It seemed to me that our long conflict had dated from the time when, as a boy of twenty, he had come to me and told me that 'he had looked into his heart and could not find that he loved me as a husband should love his wife' So I recollected the incidents of that occasion with scrupulous care and sent them to him in the form of a short story some time in the spring of 1911

I knew what I had done must pain him, but I thought it was a pain that might lead to health His answer came promptly 'I have read your story but I don't think you'll get anyone to publish it with alacrity, it's too subtle ' Then his pose of detachment broke down 'You say you died a death of me,' he wrote, 'but the death you died of me I must have died also, or you wouldn't have gone on caring about me They tore me from you, the love of my life It was the slaughter of the fœtus in the womb ' The concluding sentence of the letter ran, 'I've got a grinning skull-and-crossbones headache The amount of energy required to live is — how many volts a second?'

I saw Lawrence in the October of that year when 'Helen' and I were at a theatre in London at the same time as he and his brother Our seats were not together, but Lawrence came to speak to us during the interval He looked frail and insubstantial It was

obvious that he was living under a severe strain He sat beside me in the train that took us to Croydon I asked him if he was not well I was aware of a sudden relaxation of his defensive attitude, but he replied that he was all right Then he said that perhaps he wasn't very well and was silent for some moments It was then that he spoke to me for the first time of Edward Garnett, saying how friendly he was He said that Garnett's philosophy was 'Follow the gleam '

'That's all very well when a man's middle-aged and static,' Lawrence said with a touch of bitterness 'But when you're young it's not always easy to know what *is* the gleam '

It was impossible not to see that he was profoundly unhappy There seemed to be a central core of suffering from which he could not escape And the tragedy of it was that nobody could help him Beyond being humanly kind as one would be to any fellow-creature in pain, one could do nothing He was like a man set apart Only Lawrence might help himself Anyone else was powerless His salvation, if it was possible at all, lay within himself But before he could achieve it he had to realize the nature of his malady He did realize it in part, and in sudden flashes But his instinct was to evade it, to run away, as he said His engagement to X was an attempt to evade the dilemma that faced him If appearance counted for anything, however, evasion was an inadequate solution

When I returned on the Sunday evening Lawrence's

brother travelled along with me He had been a married man with a family ever since I had been acquainted with him, and he talked to me like an elder brother

'He isn't at all well,' he said, referring to Lawrence 'He calls out in his sleep, thinks somebody's trying to kill him And he's such a pessimist, too Over this war scare [the Agadir incident] he says it's a pity it didn't come to war He wishes it had "Let 'em fight", he said "What does it matter?" '

I read in this only Lawrence's despair The spontaneous flow of his life was checked and turned inwards destructively My companion spoke of his brother's engagement, and I asked him if he thought they would get married soon He stared at me incredulously

'Married!' he ejaculated 'I don't *think*, I *know* they'll never get married Why, how d'you suppose he let me know about his engagement?' he went on scornfully 'On a blooming postcard He brought her to see us "Well, what d'you think of her?" he said "Oh, she's all right A nice girl, very kind when mother was ill, I know But you've got the wrong girl", I said to him "Oh, do you think so," he said, "I don't " But they'll never get married, never in this world,' he concluded

The situation would have been more bearable if Lawrence had looked happy, if there had been any prospect that the issue would be fortunate But as things were it seemed to be simply a case of waiting for the breaking point And the memory of Lawrence's

face, with its white look of obstinacy, made one feel how bitter and protracted that breaking point would be

The publication of *The White Peacock* early that year came as a kind of anticlimax to the writing of it Lawrence sent me a copy with a verse on the fly-leaf saying he was like a leaf blown in the wind I don't know whether its publication brought any joy to him, but I, who had shared so closely in the making of the book — 'I its creator, you its nurse', he had written to me — had to swallow a lump when someone told me that his fiancée was handing it round to her acquaintances as the work of the clever young author to whom she was engaged The irony of the situation made me laugh, however It was literally too funny for words

Lawrence never gave me the impression that he thought much of *The White Peacock*

'It's a first novel,' he used to say deprecatingly 'Publishers take no notice of a first novel They know that nearly anybody can write one novel, if he can write at all, because it's about himself A second novel's a step further It's the third that counts, though That's the *pons asinorum* of the novelist If he can get over that ass's bridge he's a writer, he can go on '

His second novel, *The Trespasser*, was done rapidly It was something so apart from our lives that Lawrence spoke to me of it very little The only discussion I remember was about the Doppelganger He asked me what I thought about that part of the story He went on to say meditatively how a passion might suck a man

down into a vortex It was a more intense form of the old fear that he had told me about when he had been so upset by Sarah Bernhardt in *La Dame aux Camelias*

Lawrence began to write his autobiographical novel during 1911, which was perhaps the most arid year of his life He did not tell me himself that he was at work upon this theme I heard of it through 'Helen' He had been working on it for the greater part of the year, and it was some time after our brief meeting in October that he sent the entire manuscript to me, and asked me to tell him what I thought of it

He had written about two-thirds of the story, and seemed to have come to a standstill The whole thing was somehow tied up The characters were locked together in a frustrating bondage, and there seemed no way out The writing oppressed me with a sense of strain It was extremely tired writing I was sure that Lawrence had had to force himself to do it The spontaneity that I had come to regard as the distinguishing feature of his writing was quite lacking He was telling the story of his mother's married life, but the telling seemed to be at second hand, and lacked the living touch I could not help feeling that his treatment of the theme was far behind the reality in vividness and dramatic strength Now and again he seemed to strike a curious, half-apologetic note, bordering on the sentimental A nonconformist minister whose sermons the mother helped to compose was the foil to the brutal husband He gave the boy Paul a box of paints, and the

mother's heart glowed with pride as she saw her son's budding power It was story-bookish The elder brother Ernest, whose short career had always seemed to me most moving and dramatic, was not there at all I was amazed to find there was no mention of him The character Lawrence called Miriam was in the story, but placed in a bourgeois setting, in the same family from which he later took the Alvina of *The Lost Girl* He had placed Miriam in this household as a sort of foundling, and it was there that Paul Morel made her acquaintance

The theme developed into the mother's opposition to Paul's love for Miriam In this connection several remarks in this first draft impressed me particularly Lawrence had written 'What was it he (Paul Morel) wanted of her (Miriam)? Did he want her to break his mother down in him? Was that what he wanted?'

And again 'Mrs Morel saw that if Miriam could only win her son's sex sympathy there would be nothing left for her '

In another place he said 'Miriam looked upon Paul as a young man tied to his mother's apron-strings ' Finally, referring to the people around Miriam, he said 'How should they understand her — petty trades-people!' But the issue was left quite unresolved Lawrence had carried the situation to the point of deadlock and stopped there

As I read through the manuscript I had before me all the time the vivid picture of the reality I felt again

the tenseness of the conflict, and the impending spiritual clash So in my reply I told him I was very surprised that he had kept so far from reality in his story, that I thought what had really happened was much more poignant and interesting than the situations he had invented In particular I was surprised that he had omitted the story of Ernest, which seemed to me vital enough to be worth telling as it actually happened Finally I suggested that he should write the whole story again, and keep it true to life

Two considerations prompted me to make these suggestions First of all I felt that the theme, if treated adequately, had in it the stuff of a magnificent story It only wanted setting down, and Lawrence possessed the miraculous power of translating the raw material of life into significant form That was my first reaction to the problem My deeper thought was that in the doing of it Lawrence might free himself from his strange obsession with his mother I thought he might be able to work out the theme in the realm of spiritual reality, where alone it could be worked out, and so resolve the conflict in himself Since he had elected to deal with the big and difficult subject of his family, and the interactions of the various relationships, I felt he ought to do it faithfully—'with both hands earnestly', as he was fond of quoting It seemed to me that if he was able to treat the theme with strict integrity he would thereby walk into freedom, and cast off the trammelling past like an old skin

The particular issue he might give to the story never entered my head That was of no consequence The great thing was that I thought I could see a liberated Lawrence coming out of it Towards Lawrence's mother I had no bitter feeling, and could have none, because she was his mother But I felt that he was being strangled in a bond that was even more powerful since her death, and that until he was freed from it he was held in check and unable to develop

In all this I acted from pure intuition, arising out of my deep knowledge of his situation I said no word of this to him because I thought it must inevitably work itself out in the novel, provided he treated the subject with integrity And I had a profound faith in Lawrence's fundamental integrity

He fell in absolutely with my suggestion and asked me to write what I could remember of our early days, because, as he truthfully said, my recollection of those days was so much clearer than his I agreed to do so, and began almost at once, but had not got very far when word came that Lawrence was dangerously ill with pneumonia I was sure he would get better and went on writing the notes for him When he was convalescent the first thing he wrote was a tiny pencilled message to me, saying 'Did I frighten you all? I'm sorry Never mind, I'm soon going to be all right '

I saw him during the Christmas holiday sitting by the fire in his bedroom, grievously thin, but yet somehow so vital Whenever I looked at him, I seemed to see

the naked flame of life It was so as he sat in his room on that sunny Saturday morning, from time to time putting a scrap of linen to his lips, and then dropping it into the fire He looked at me with eyes in which a light would leap, then sink, and leap again I was staying with 'Helen' Lawrence asked me where we were going for lunch, and in the way he suddenly turned his head when I told him, I saw the whole bitterness of his illness and his enforced severance from activity

He asked me if I had written the notes I promised to do, and I told him I had begun to write them before he was ill and just went on He said he was going to Bournemouth as soon as he was strong enough, and after that he would come and fetch them This was our first real talk since his mother's funeral Some of the old magic returned, the sense of inner understanding which was the essence of our friendship

Lawrence wrote from Bournemouth 'I advise you never to come here for a holiday The place exists for the sick They hide the fact as far as possible, but it's like a huge hospital At every turn you come across invalids being pushed or pulled along Quite a nice place of course, everything arranged for the comfort of the invalid, sunny sheltered corners and the like, but pah — I shall be glad when I get away'

He broke the journey home to stay with Edward Garnett and returned to Eastwood early in February I was told that he was breaking off his engagement to

X He sent me a postcard 'I hear you're in digs at the moment If you are still in digs next week, I'd like to come and see you, if I may '

After the long absence Lawrence felt nervous at meeting my people A sudden spurt of wintry weather had made it difficult for me to get home, so I sent him my temporary address, and he came to see me early in the week He surprisingly brought me a box of chocolates I could hardly believe that we were really together again I looked at him from time to time to make sure it was not illusion He spoke bitterly about his illness and what he considered the cause of it According to my old custom I did not contradict him but let him talk himself out I never took his assertions about people and things seriously They were not necessarily true, but they showed the inclination of his mood To occupy my nervous hands I had provided myself with some knitting Lawrence looked at it and said acidly

'There's nothing I admire like industry,' and I was unable to knit any more

We tried to pick up the interrupted threads of our friendship I learned that he was free from his engagement I felt that now he must have convinced himself, and told him I would not have had things otherwise.

'That's just you,' he said half bitterly, 'select only what is good from an experience and then say that everything happens for the best '

I could see no reason why all should not happen for

the best, but he seemed full of chagrin and unappeased grief I wanted his mood of resentment to evaporate, and was about to move over to his side, when, as plainly as though he spoke aloud, there came into my consciousness the words 'Don't imagine that because mother's dead you can claim me', and I felt the ground taken from under my feet Lawrence must have been aware of my check, because he roused himself to talk — about the all-embracing nature of the Roman Catholic Church

After a little while he said

'If we were to marry now you'd expect me to stay at home ' I replied that naturally I should

'Home is the place one works in,' I said

'But I don't want a home,' he said obstinately, 'I want to be free I think I shall go abroad '

He said he would go first to Germany and stay in the Rhineland with some relatives of his German uncle, and later go further afield, and remain abroad probably a year It seemed to me an excellent plan In the course of a year's wandering abroad I thought he might come to some kind of peace with himself But he still seemed deeply unsatisfied, with himself, or me, or both of us He crossed to the hearth and sat there in silence, elbow on knee, his head resting on his hand, staring into the fire It was the familiar spectacle, Lawrence in the grip of the forces that pulled him with equal power in opposite directions But what I saw at the moment was his utter loneliness, his separation, as

it seemed, from everything else in life, and as always, I was overcome with pity I slipped my hand into his that was hanging limp This is the meeting Lawrence has commemorated in the poem 'After Many Days'

I gave him the notes I had written and he subsequently incorporated them into the novel, altering and adapting them to suit his purpose I went with him to the railway station On the tram he seized my hand

'I wish we could run away on this,' he said

But I did not see why we needed to run away Then he told me that he would probably never return to school He was making a little money by his writing and would try to live on it If the worst should come to the worst he could always go back into school But he hoped it wouldn't come to that Down on the platform we were reminded so much of his days in College He was jubilant at the thought of being free from school

'For him no more the sitting class shall wait,' he said gleefully

The writing of the novel (still called *Paul Morel*) now went on apace Lawrence passed the manuscript on to me as he wrote it, a few sheets at a time, just as he had done with *The White Peacock*, only that this story was written with incomparably greater speed and intensity

The early pages delighted me Here was all that spontaneous flow, the seemingly effortless translation

of life that filled me with admiration His descriptions of family life were so vivid, so exact, and so concerned with everyday things we had never even noticed before There was Mrs Morel ready for ironing, lightly spitting on the iron to test its heat, invested with a reality and significance hitherto unsuspected It was his power to transmute the common experiences into significance that I always felt to be Lawrence's greatest gift He did not distinguish between small and great happenings, the common round was full of mystery, awaiting interpretation Born and bred of working people, he had the rare gift of seeing them from within, and revealing them on their own plane An incident that particularly pleased me was where Morel was recovering from an accident at the pit, and his friend Jerry came to see him The conversation of the two men and their tenderness to one another were a revelation to me I felt that Lawrence was coming into his true kingdom as a creative artist, and an interpreter of the people to whom he belonged

I saw him fairly frequently during the first weeks of the writing of *Sons and Lovers* He went quite often also to my married sister's cottage, where he talked about himself with his customary frankness He told her 'A 's quite ready to step into mother's shoes If I go to Nottingham in the evening it's — "Where have I been? Whom have I seen? What was my business?" I say to her "Ask me another " A mustn't think she's mother.'

He came to the farm again, a little shy at meeting father

'But it will be all right after the first brush,' he said

Mother gave him the same quiet welcome as ever, but father was not the same The difference was subtle There was no longer that indefinable attitude of special recognition on father's part In treating him as some-one quite ordinary he managed to convey a sense of forfeited regard that Lawrence felt acutely

But then he was not the same either The sunny disposition that used to create such a happy atmosphere was seldom in evidence He was spasmodic and rest-less, resentful of the need to be careful of his health, and not well adapted to fit into the rather grim mid-lands life now that he had no mother to make a home for him In company he would maintain his jaunty exterior, but below the surface was a hopelessness hardly to be distinguished from despair He seemed like a man with a broken mainspring With all his gifts, he was somehow cut off, unable to attain that complete participation in life that he craved for

There was a Sunday when he came to the farm to tea After tea we stood round the piano singing hymns and Folk songs My younger sister, who was playing the piano, turned to the hymn 'We are but little children weak' I was about to turn the page, saying, 'We don't want that,' but Lawrence stopped me impulsively

'It's true, we *are* Let's have it,' and he joined in the singing with gusto

Later he watched my brothers getting ready to go out

'Are you going courting?' he asked them, half enviously

'We're supposed to be,' they replied, laughing at his strange question

When we were alone his painfully bright manner fell from him

'Except in relation to beauty or passion you never think of sex,' he said to me We talked about his writing and he upbraided me for not making an effort to do something myself He was so sure I could write if I would try 'If you had only two books out, I shouldn't care,' he said I knew he was reproaching himself for having occupied my time with his own work Presently he said in a halting way, as if struggling to find the exact words

'When we are not together, since I have been away from you, I don't think the same, feel the same, I'm not the same man *I* can't write poetry '

The words went to my heart, for his tone was the extreme of sincerity and of despair We were together again, and outwardly there was nothing to keep us apart, but his mother's ban was more powerful now than in her lifetime I began to realize that whatever approach Lawrence made to me inevitably involved him in a sense of disloyalty to his mother Some bond,

some understanding, most likely unformulated and all the stronger for that, seemed to exist between them It was a bond that definitely excluded me from the only position in which I could be of vital help to him We were back in the old dilemma, but it was a thousand times more cruel because of the altered circumstances He seemed to be fixed in the centre of the tension, helpless, waiting for one pull to triumph over the other

The novel was written in this state of spirit, at a white heat of concentration The writing of it was fundamentally a terrific fight for a bursting of the tension The break came in the treatment of Miriam As the sheets of manuscript came rapidly to me I was bewildered and dismayed at that treatment I began to perceive that I had set Lawrence a task far beyond his strength In my confidence I had not doubted that he would work out the problem with integrity But he burked the real issue It was his old inability to face his problem squarely His mother had to be supreme, and for the sake of that supremacy every disloyalty was permissible

The realization of this slowly dawned on me as I read the manuscript He asked for my opinion, but comment seemed futile — not merely futile, but impossible I could not appeal to Lawrence for justice as between his treatment of Mrs Morel and Miriam He left off coming to see me and sent the manuscript by post His avoidance of me was significant I felt

it was useless to attempt to argue the matter out with him Either he was aware of what he was doing and persisted, or he did not know, and in that case no amount of telling would enlighten him It was one of the things he had to find out for himself The baffling truth, of course, lay between the two He was aware, but he was under the spell of the domination that had ruled his life hitherto, and he refused to know So instead of a release and a deliverance from bondage, the bondage was glorified and made absolute His mother conquered indeed, but the vanquished one was her son In *Sons and Lovers* Lawrence handed his mother the laurels of victory

The Clara of the second half of the story was a clever adaptation of elements from three people, and her creation arose as a complement to Lawrence's mood of failure and defeat The events related had no foundation in fact, whatever their psychological significance Having utterly failed to come to grips with his problem in real life, he created the imaginary Clara as a compensation Even in the novel the compensation is unreal and illusory, for at the end Paul Morel calmly hands her back to her husband, and remains suspended over the abyss of his despair Many of the incidents struck me as cheap and commonplace, in spite of the hard brilliance of the narration I realized that I had naively credited Lawrence with superhuman powers of detachment

The shock of *Sons and Lovers* gave the death-blow

to our friendship If I had told Lawrence that I had died before, I certainly died again I had a strange feeling of separation from the body The daily life was sheer illusion The only reality was the betrayal of *Sons and Lovers* I felt it was a betrayal in an inner sense, for I had always believed that there was a bond between us, if it was no more than the bond of a common suffering But the brutality of his treatment seemed to deny any bond That I understood so well what made him do it only deepened my despair He had to present a distorted picture of our association so that the martyr's halo might sit becomingly on his mother's brow But to give a recognizable picture of our friendship which yet completely left out the years of devotion to the development of his genius — devotion that had been pure joy — seemed to me like presenting *Hamlet* without the Prince of Denmark What else but the devotion to a common end had held us together against his mother's repeated assaults? Neither could I feel that he had represented in any degree faithfully the nature and quality of our desperate search for a right relationship I was hurt beyond all expression I didn't know how to bear it

Lawrence had said that he never took sides, but his attitude placed him tacitly on the side of those who had mocked at love — except mother-love He seemed to have identified himself with the prevailing atmosphere of ridicule and innuendo It was a fatal alignment, for it made me see him as a philistine of the philistines, and

not, as I had always believed, inwardly honouring an unspoken bond, and suffering himself from the strange hostility to love He had sometimes argued — in an effort to convince himself — that morality and art have nothing to do with one another However that might be, I could not help feeling that integrity and art have a great deal to do with one another The best I could think of him was that he had run with the hare and hunted with the hounds His significance withered and his dimensions shrank He ceased to matter supremely

I tried hard to remind myself that after all *Sons and Lovers* was only a novel It was not the truth, although it must inevitably stand for truth I could hear in advance Lawrence's protesting voice 'Of course it isn't the truth It isn't meant for the truth It's an adaptation from life, as all art must be It *isn't* what I think of you, you know it isn't What shall I put? What do you want me to put ?' in a mounting crescendo of irritation and helplessness I felt that words could only exacerbate the situation The remedy must be left to time And as I sat and looked at the subtle distortion of what had been the deepest values of my life, the one gleam of light was the realization that Lawrence had overstated his case, that some day his epic of maternal love and filial devotion would be viewed from another angle, that of his own final despair

The book was written in about six weeks, under the influence of something amounting almost to frenzy

Although he avoided me Lawrence wanted to know what I thought of the novel So, after I had studied the last sheets of the manuscript, I suggested that, as I had a holiday on a certain Monday in March, I should spend the week-end with my sister and we might meet and talk about the book Lawrence replied that he had promised to go on a visit to a schoolmaster friend in Staffordshire on that particular week-end, but he would try to get back in good time on the Sunday From the tone of his letter I judged that he intended me to have an opportunity of saying anything I wished to say, but it was to be a limited opportunity I made some notes on minor points and took the manuscript with me

Lawrence liked the atmosphere of my sister's cottage Her husband's genial presence, and her own quick intuitive likes and dislikes, coupled with an equally quick sympathy, made a setting in which he could feel entirely at home He entertained them by his tales of people he had met in literary circles With his gift for mimicry he would reproduce comic incidents and bring them to tears of laughter He painted a droll picture of himself and another young poet walking through London at midnight with a tipsy and amorous woman-poet, old enough to be their mother, whose harp they were carrying Lawrence's tales doubtless lost nothing in the telling

It was his ambition to make my brother-in-law drunk, or at least to 'loosen his tongue', and with that

end in view he brought a bottle of wine to the cottage The two men drank together, carefully watching the effect upon each other, but while Lawrence grew slightly hilarious his companion became glum and his mouth shut tight The wine only sealed his lips

Lawrence told them how Edward Garnett and he had drunk wine together, and added quaintly

'Garnett wanted to make me talk, but I always knew what I was saying He thinks I told him everything, but I didn't I told him nearly everything But there were some things I didn't tell him '

We awaited Lawrence on the Sunday with mixed anticipations My sister knew nothing about the novel I had long ago formed the habit of keeping my own counsel, and she had the supreme wisdom of never asking questions Lawrence had said he might by luck be with us for the midday meal, as the one train of the day set off in the morning, but he failed to put in an appearance The afternoon wore on My brother-in-law and I went for a run on our bicycles, but Lawrence had not arrived at tea-time It began to rain, and just as dusk was drawing in he appeared at the door, white and exhausted, carrying a heavy suitcase He had been travelling all day and was nearly worn out with the cross-country journey from the Staffordshire border The trains had been slow and the connections bad In addition there was a touring theatrical party on the train and the transfer of their 'properties' had occa-

sioned no little delay Finally Lawrence had walked up the long hill from the station having had very little to eat during the day I lifted the suitcase and exclaimed at its weight

'I haven't got a couple of suits in it,' he snapped savagely I had never heard him speak in that tone before

My sister put out tea for him and he took his boots off They set him in the armchair, 'the grandfather's chair', and presently we drew round the fire But Lawrence's nerves were frayed The long journey had tired him, and at heart he was disappointed that he had arrived so late He kept up his jaunty air, however, telling us about the 'theatricals' and their 'properties' They had amused him at first He had thought travelling along with them great fun. He had mixed with the party and talked to them, but as the day dragged on he had found them boring Now he could only keep his disappointment in check by an effort I stooped to prop his boots up against the fender so that they should dry the better He apparently thought I was going to push them out of the way and turned on me a look of sudden fury When he saw his mistake he swung his head round quickly My sister and her husband understood his mood of chagrin and humoured him like a sick child They laughed at his little sallies, accompanied by mimicry, about the theatrical party until he tired of the subject Then he fell to talking about his friend who had married not long before and had got a baby son

'Fatherhood's a myth,' Lawrence declared 'There's nothing in it I asked — how he felt about it, and he said he felt nothing, nothing at all He has no feeling whatever towards that infant There's no such thing as fatherhood,' he concluded slowly, as though the words tasted sweet on his tongue

My sister and I were silent Lawrence's perversity was no new thing to us We were acquainted with the history of the young man in question, and could not help reflecting that his fatherhood involved someone's motherhood, a myth less easily disposed of Lawrence knew quite well what we were thinking, and enlarged upon the theme characteristically 'The average man with a family,' he went on, 'is nothing but a cart-horse, dragging the family behind him for the best part of his life I'm not going to be a cart-horse '

My brother-in-law twinkled at him, chuckling softly

'You're nothing but a rake, Bert, a positive rake,' he said

'Nay, dunna say that, Bill, dunna say that,' Lawrence replied comically

The evening passed in talk that had an acid flavour under its lightness, and when he took his departure his fundamental desolation showed palpably beneath his flippant exterior

He came next day in the early afternoon, tense, looking as if he had not slept Almost at once he asked my sister to give him a cup of tea He had a headache He had stayed in bed late, but still felt tired We sat

in the cottage, talking about nothing in particular, and the precious minutes slipped by Lawrence looked far too much a sick man for me to dream of telling him all I thought and felt about his novel I knew that he dreaded what I might say, yet he wanted to know At least he did not want it to be said that he had given me no opportunity to speak I made no move until he looked at me with an interrogative glance, and said

'Do you want to go out, or would you rather stay in?'

I said it depended upon how he felt, and he declared he felt all right

We went out into the cloudy afternoon and walked past Greasley Church, then took the footpath through the fields where he and my brothers had worked together at hay harvest Lawrence kept a sharp look-out for violets in the hedgerows He said there must be some about because A had seen youths coming home from the pit with bunches of violets and celandines in their hands At the mention of violets and celandines I had hard work to keep the tears back, because it seemed as if springtime and spring flowers had gone out of my life for ever Until then his manner had been bleak and forbidding, but now he softened a little and said almost wistfully

'I thought perhaps you would have something to say about the writing '

I felt as if I was sinking in deep water But it was now the eleventh hour, and the time for speaking had gone by, and I merely said

'I've put some notes in with the manuscript,' and he replied quietly, as though he was suddenly out of breath, 'Oh, all right I thought you might like to say something That's all '

It was not that I would not speak but simply that I could not Between pride and anguish I found it impossible to tell him that the account he had given of our friendship amounted to a travesty of the real thing His defensive attitude had kept me at bay, as he intended it should, and now the time was gone It was too late I could only remain silent We spoke no more about the novel and soon turned back towards the cottage

Lawrence's manner at tea showed a marked difference He was freed from some kind of apprehension An acute alertness was visible to me beneath his flippant conversation He was puzzled and was watching me narrowly, trying to find a clue to the situation I had no clue to give him, and felt offended at the hard quality of his observation It was time for me to return home I knew that he would walk some of the way with me and I suddenly turned to my sister and asked her to accompany us She looked from Lawrence to me in perplexity

'Do you really want me?' she asked

'I was thinking you'd be company for Bert on the way home,' I replied in a casual tone

Lawrence did not speak I was standing in front of the mirror that hung over the mantelpiece, pinning on

my hat, and my eyes met his fixed upon me in a look of intense concentration. His stare sent a revulsion of feeling through me He seemed a total stranger

I gave him the parcel of manuscript He put it ready to take in a fatalistic silence, and the three of us set out Lawrence insisted on pushing my bicycle, although I begged him to let me take it He said he felt he would never want to get on a bicycle again, but he didn't mind how many miles he walked My sister and I walked together on the footpath, and Lawrence was a little step away on the road It was not easy to talk to him there, so he walked for most of the way in silence At the top of the hill he said he would turn back, he was tired I got on my bicycle and rode home, feeling numbed to the core, for I knew that in our wordless way we had come to an end I had nourished a faint hope that our little time together might yield an opportunity for a real discussion But Lawrence was expecting me to attack him He knew I must be hurt, and thought I should be furiously angry What he did not understand was that the hurt went deeper than any anger It went down to the roots of my feeling for him and altered my conception of his nature

He walked back to the cottage with my sister She told me later that he said, referring to me

'She's wild with me, isn't she? She's angry about something ' My sister replied that she was not aware of it, but he refused to believe her, and insisted

'She is, she's angry Hasn't she told you about it?'

He seemed tired and dejected, she said When they reached the cottage he took the manuscript and said he would go home to bed

There was no further attempt at discussion of the novel Lawrence made no approach to me nor I to him I returned what few books of his I had, and he replied in a casual note The more I thought about the situation — and it was impossible to think about anything else — the more certain I became of the futility of attempting to reason the matter out with him I realized that the entire structure of the story rested upon the attitude he had adopted To do any kind of justice to our relationship would involve a change in his attitude towards his mother's influence, and of that I was now convinced he was incapable It was the old situation in a new setting, the necessity for the mother's supremacy More than a year before he had told me so in exact words, only without referring directly to his mother

'You are the irremediable thing,' he had said, looking at me as though he would consume me with his eyes 'You are what *has* to be You are what cannot be helped The great thing now is that you should not become bitter '

It roused my irony that he should take my doom for granted, and in spite of my misery I laughed, and replied

'No, I don't think I shall turn bitter ' But Lawrence was in such deadly earnest he did not perceive why I

laughed Now, in the novel, he had taken up the same position, and appointed himself judge and executioner He held over me a doom of negation and futility It pressed upon me like a weight, making the nights and days a torture I dreaded lest I should come to fulfil it, as he seemed convinced I must

My next meeting with Lawrence came about by pure chance On Easter Monday I was in the booking-hall of the railway station waiting for my sister, when suddenly Lawrence appeared at the barrier, accompanied by his sister and her fiancé I had a view of Lawrence for a full moment before he was aware of my presence The misery I saw depicted in his face was beyond anything I had ever imagined Utterly lonely, he looked as if his life had turned to complete negation His expression at that moment was the direct development of the face that he used to turn towards the dark fields when he would declare, in agony of frustration '*Nothing* matters' His look changed the moment he caught sight of me, but it was still a joyless face I explained why I was there We talked for a few minutes, and then he went with his companions to an afternoon show at the Empire Lawrence told my sister of the brief encounter He said that I looked white, but perhaps I was cold

My sister has told me that in those days Lawrence impressed her with a sense of his divine belief in him-

self She said he seemed to feel he was important to the world, and he resented any claim that would curtail his experience and therefore his usefulness He felt himself a medium charged with some power for the good of mankind Yet he wished he could escape it and grow stout, and attractive to women He longed to be loved as a man instead of as a poet He told her also that he was a common man with an intellect, and that I was in love with his intellect He would say one day that he must accept every experience that came to him, for the sake of his 'mission', and the next that he was nothing but a simple, ordinary man, with a little more than the ordinary man's mental equipment Her final verdict on him was 'He sees the light and chooses the dark '

I saw Lawrence for the next and last time on a Sunday morning some three weeks later when father and I drove to my sister's cottage I did not know that Lawrence was spending the week-end there, but I was not surprised to see him We arrived unexpectedly and I could not help seeing that my coming startled him He looked a different man from the one I had seen momentarily at the barrier of the railway station The look of despair was gone He appeared more ordinary and equable But for once I saw Lawrence tongue-tied He didn't know what to say to us He went outside and sat on the low garden wall, leaning forward and looking intently at the ground, in an odd attitude of

concentration Presently he came into the cottage and looked at me curiously as though he would ask whether I had brought him some message I asked him if he would care to drive home with us He said he would like to, only my sister was expecting him to stay So, true to his habit of letting other people make his decisions, he left it with her, and she, having prepared for him, naturally preferred that he should stay But he drove part of the way with us He almost winced at my father's casual tone, so different from the warmth of old days

Lawrence talked to us with a forced brightness about his going to Germany He expected to go within a few days I asked about his work, and he spoke of a play that was perhaps going to be produced in London On the level above Watnall hill he got out of the trap to return by the footpath over the fields We shook hands and said good-bye like casual acquaintances, and father hoped he would manage to keep in better health Lawrence thanked him Before we disappeared round a bend in the road I turned and saw him still standing where he had alighted, looking after us I waved my hand and he raised his hat with the familiar gesture I never saw him again

My sister said later that he returned to the cottage in a thoughtful mood He carved the joint, and was subdued and gentle In the afternoon he and her husband were lying out in the field on rugs, and Lawrence suddenly exclaimed

'Bill, I like a *gushing* woman '

On a Sunday evening soon after his departure for Germany, Lawrence's sister E paid an unexpected call on my sister In the course of conversation she remarked

'Our Bert can never love any woman He could only love his mother '

The remark rang like the echo of a family discussion

It was not long before I had a postcard from Lawrence, a beautiful view of Trier Cathedral In another week or so came a letter in which he said 'I am going through *Paul Morel* I'm sorry it turned out as it has You'll have to go on forgiving me '

His words aroused no response in me My forgiveness or non-forgiveness was equally irrelevant What mattered was something in himself, something he had to find out, which only the inexorable logic of circumstance could show him As for myself, I felt that I had suffered a terrible inner injury It required all my effort to avoid a collapse

A further letter arrived from Lawrence a few weeks later It was addressed to me, and enclosed within a descriptive letter for the family to read was another, which was inscribed *Pour vous seulement* It contained a hysterical announcement of the new attachment he had formed, and enjoined the strictest secrecy upon me 'Don't tell M , don't tell N C , don't tell *anybody* Only A knows ' I felt it was probably the last

request Lawrence would ever make of me, and I kept his secret

The news came as a shock, but I was not really surprised My deepest feeling was a sense of relief At last I was really free I had always felt a great responsibility towards Lawrence This now vanished He had passed definitely beyond my ken Now I understood what he had meant when, not many weeks earlier, he had said to me in a querulous voice

'Are you *great* enough?'

My inveterate irony had prompted me to reply 'Probably not '

I answered his letter immediately 'Your news does not surprise me I half expected it In my heart I am glad, because it sets me free ' All the same, the realization that our long, and in many ways wonderful friendship had actually come to an end was a very deep blow, comparable to a kind of death I had no illusions about it In the passing of Lawrence I saw also the extinction of my greater self Life without him had a bleak aspect I had grown up within his orbit, and now that he was definitely gone I had to make a difficult new beginning For a long time in a quiet and deliberate way I wished I had done with life The remnant that was left looked so ugly

It was then that I happened to find *The Brothers Karamazov* in our library I was quite unable to read Before my eyes had travelled half way down the page

my mind refused to take in the sense I found myself gazing at the printed words and seeing only the wreckage of my life But Dostoevsky's masterpiece gripped my attention I took it home, and the book completely absorbed me, mercifully shutting out my own disaster I was fascinated immediately by the psychological plan, setting out the whole psychic panorama with such economy The terrible old man and his four sons, each by a different mother, provided at once that clash of the spirit that was for me the real substance of drama In some incomprehensible way I seemed to have known all the characters before The saintly Zosima was no stranger There were times when, like Ivan Karamazov, I wanted to give in my ticket, but Alyosha's murmured 'It is disobedience', spoke to something deep within me And the story of the *Grand Inquisitor* was a problem to turn over in one's soul to the end of life I don't know how long I kept the book I seemed to be reading it for months Probably I read many parts of it several times When at last I reluctantly returned it to the library I felt that I had been living in another world Its effect upon me was exactly analogous to deep sleep in illness It had placed a distance between me and the catastrophe of life I left it refreshed in spirit

I was now able to face my own inner chaos In the terrible necessity to understand what had really happened between Lawrence and me I set myself to analyse our friendship I unravelled it strand by strand, and

somehow managed to get an objective view, so that I was able to go forward into life instead of being crushed under a dead weight of unassimilated experience

Lawrence had not replied to my letter telling him I was glad to feel myself set free, and in the following spring his first book of poems was published A copy came to me from the publisher — with the author's compliments These were for the most part the poems that Lawrence had written in the thick little college notebook that I knew so well Very few of the pieces were new to me I was glad to receive the book, so I asked my sister for his address, and wrote, thanking him for it, and made a few remarks about the poems His reply, and also a bulky parcel of proof-sheets, came several days later I felt that my comments were unwelcome, for Lawrence wrote 'I think the little poetry book is all right I'm sending you the proofs of the novel, I think you ought to see it before it's published I heard from A that you were in digs again Send the novel on to her when you've done with it [here he gave her address] This last year hasn't been all roses for me I've had my ups and my downs out here with Frieda But we mean to marry as soon as the divorce is through We shall settle down quite quietly somewhere, probably in Berkshire Frieda and I discuss you endlessly We should like you to come out to us some time, if you would care to But we are leaving

here in about a week, it's getting too hot for us, I mean the weather, not the place I must leave off now, they're waiting for me '

I read his letter several times, not knowing whether to laugh or to cry I felt suffocated The clumsiness of his approach was plain, but to my mind there was a priggish note as well It was the tone of the letter that offended me There was the off-handed attempt to be casual and matter-of-fact, and yet to appeal to my sympathy I wondered also why he should send his novel to me in this manner, as though I was a stranger to it I knew it far too well to have any desire to read it again Indeed, I didn't dare to risk a second reading, for I was by no means sure of my capacity to recover a second time I did glance through some pages, however, hoping that in the interval his outlook might have mellowed and led him to soften some harshness But I found both story and mood alike unchanged

As chance would have it, my sister came to see me, and in my dismay I did what I had never done before, I showed her Lawrence's letter She was furious

'How dare he send a letter like this to *you*,' she moaned Then her anger flashed out 'Send it back to him,' she said 'Send it back ' I laughed mirthlessly

'Oh, I've had worse letters than this from him,' I said

'Then some others ought to have gone back before this,' she retorted

I showed her the proofs of the novel and suggested

that she should take it to read But she would have nothing to do with it I didn't want it either, so I reversed the wrapper and posted the proofs as Lawrence had directed

The suggestion that I should return Lawrence's letter struck me at first as wild and impossible But I turned the idea over in my mind, and the more I looked at it, the better I liked it I shrank from doing what seemed a brutal thing, yet I felt that the action in itself would say effectively what no words could say One thing seemed certain, there was no possible basis for any future friendship, whereas the stage was set for the most grotesque misunderstanding I felt that the time had come for a break, and a clean break seemed infinitely preferable Another motive had some weight with me On the occasion when his mother made her final intervention between us, immediately before her fatal illness, some words Lawrence had used in the long harangue with which he sought to justify his action to himself remained in my mind He had said

'An ounce of justice is worth a ton of generosity Any woman will give a man a ton of generosity, but is there a woman who will give him an ounce of justice?'

I could not refrain from thinking

'Here is your ounce of justice'

All the same, I hated to hurt him But I copied out the foreign address and put his letter — which was torn a little through being unfolded so many times — in the envelope As I dropped it in the pillar box I felt sorry

for him I knew it would give him a shock And later, when I thought the letter had probably reached him, I was grieved to think of his pain But I was not sorry for my action It was somehow necessary Indeed, I never did regret it, for it acted as a kind of release and let out all feeling of resentment No words could have produced such a cleansing effect In a favourite phrase of Lawrence's, it drew the line under the finished sum Not that I felt the sum to be entirely finished I thought it was just possible that he would write and say he hadn't meant to be so stupid But he never wrote to me again, and I never really wished him to, nor did I ever write to him I had gone with him as far as I could go Nothing further was possible

In the days when the cloud of his mother's disapproval first began to loom heavy over our young horizon, Lawrence said to me, 'Of course, it will be *you* who will write my epitaph '

I was too pained and startled to speak, and answered only with a shake of the head He smiled at me brilliantly and reiterated softly, nodding

'Oh yes, you will It will fall to you to write my epitaph '

And from time to time in moments of intense feeling he would repeat his strange forecast His words had no literal meaning for me then, because in those days Lawrence and death seemed to stand at opposite poles He was always to me a symbol of overflowing life He

seemed able to enter into other lives, and not only human lives With wild things, flowers and birds, a rabbit in a snare, the speckled eggs in a hole in the ground he was in primal sympathy—a living vibration passed between him and them, so that I always saw him, in the strictest sense of the word, immortal Perhaps it was because these intuitions of hidden things flashed upon us now and again in swift illumination that he laid this task upon me And with the clarification that time brings and its truer perspective, those of us whose youth was the richer for knowing him see again the dear familiar figure, and we remember how much of our joy came to us through the inspiration of Lawrence's gay and dauntless spirit

i.a.C.2

M de Bolt-Cross. Van France.

14.. Novem 1928

Dear David

I hardly recognised you as J D - and you must be a man now, instead of a thin little lad with very fair hair. Sigh, what a gap in time! It makes me feel scared.

Whatever I forget, I shall never forget the Craggs - I loved it so. I loved to come to you all, it really was a new life began in me there. The water-pippin by the door - those maiden-blush roses that Flower would lean over and eat - and Trip floundering round - And stewed figs for tea in winter, and in August green stewed apples. Do you still have them? Tell

your mother I never forget, no matter
where life carries me. [illegible] does she still
think of [illegible] come and finds her
in a dirty white apron? or doesn't she wear
work-aprons any more? Oh, I'd love to
be nineteen again, and coming up through
the Warren and catching the first glimpse of
the buildings. Then I'd sit on the sofa under
the window, and we'd crowd round the little
table to tea, in that tiny little kitchen I
was so at home in.

Bei tempi passati, cari amici!
Quanto cari, non saprete mai." — I couldn't never
tell you in English how much it all meant
to me, how I still feel about it.

If there is anything I can ever do
[illegible]

'SOME MEMORIES OF D H LAWRENCE'

by May Holbrook

SOME MEMORIES OF D H LAWRENCE

by

MAY HOLBROOK[1]

p *555*

Bert was ten when I first went to his home[2], and Saturday mornings found him cheerfully helping in the work, cleaning boots or knives and forks, with an apron tied under his armpits, a smudge on his face, and his thick, fine hair rumpled One morning he was waiting for me " I must show you Mother's flowers," he said, skipping about while the milk was put away, and then led me through the scullery into the yard where a bit of space made a drying ground for the wash, its line-post between the house and the ash-pit A tiny spot like a tablecloth was protected by a few bits of board for palings, and here bloomed a handful of flowers Bert hopped on one foot as he excitedly explained

" Mother calls it her 'wilderness' They're all

[1] The complete memoir was first published in Volume III of *D H Lawrence a Composite Biography*, and all page references refer to that volume

[2] This would be 3 Walker Street, Eastwood, near which stood the ash tree described in *Sons and Lovers* May Holbrook at that time lived about a quarter of a mile away in The Breach

mixed together, they're best that way It's a wilderness because they're all mixed together They're lovely, aren't they? "

" It's a 'wilderness' right enough, isn't it, child? " said the mother " I just took the seeds and scattered them all together He thinks they're pretty, but they're nothing, are they, child? "

" Oh, I think they're ever so nice, don't you? " insisted her son, hopping from one foot to the other and said when I was dubious " Well, anyway, they're better than none, and I think Mother's wilderness is lovely "

He always spoke rapidly and in a high voice tingling with excitement or perhaps enthusiasm

p 556

He was never still, a quick, lively boy interested in everything, but not strong enough to play with boys, they said He had a slight cough Sometimes they made him sit still, and then he looked like a captive as he sat by the window, his elder sister beside him, a big rug in the making, like a barricade over their knees He was snipping lengths of cloth, while his sister pegged them into the rug

" She's making him cut rags for her," complained the mother, " and she's no call to There's no hurry for that rug "

Her daughter began to complain shrilly why she wanted to finish it

" Aye, you want, right enough," said the mother

tartly, " and what you want you make him help you with!"

The girl again upheld her reasons, but the boy snipped viciously at the cloth and said nothing, his lips tight shut He gave me the flicker of a smile as I passed the window which looked onto the gloomy back yard, as if he longed to be free

p 560

One afternoon, Bert was in high glee and hopped about the doorstep, his eyes shining

" You'd never guess, I shall have to tell you, because you'd never guess in ever so long " He paused dramatically " Mother's writing poetry! She is, you may not believe it, but she is "

His mother came to the door, an exercise book almost hidden in the folds of her skirt as it hung from her hand

" Well, child, how's your mother? "

But he burst out, " I've told her!"

" Aye, clatting, I might have known It's nothing, child "

But Bert cried, " It is, it is It's poetry "

" Nonsense I just amuse myself sometimes with making up verses "

" She's going to send it to a mag," he announced

" He means a magazine, child," Mrs Lawrence explained

" She sent some once before," Bert volunteered

" Aye, and that's all that came of it I expect it got

into the wastepaper basket But come in We are all by ourselves, for a wonder Just the two of us "

Nothing more was ever said about the poetry, though that afternoon her son sketched glowing pictures of his mother becoming famous and making them rich

p 566

Bert's genius for making friends soon won the entire family,[1] and if he was late, someone looking in would ask " Isn't Bert here yet? " And on the rare occasion when he didn't come, there was real disappointment, for each separate member looked for some special pleasure he could give He was a mine of information and a fine organizer of games, and the fun ran high in the farmyard while I tried to study When an extra one was necessary for a game, Bert would help me But in the hurry to get out to play, he would beat the table and raise his voice energetically, and I would run out for a few minutes to the game to get rid of him, and then return to plod along in my own slow way

One evening he exasperated me with his hammering the table and his storming, and I closed the book He sat, lips apart, knuckles raised, staring at me, then called out

" Mrs Chambers, your May won't let me help her "

Mother came in, amusement in her fine dark eyes " I think it's very good of Bert to help you "

And I replied, truculently, " He doesn't help me, he only shouts at me! "

[1] The Chambers family, who had now moved to The Haggs farm

Bert apologized and coaxed and promised not to shout or hammer the table, but I refused his help and was secretly glad of the excuse Already I had heard that his family had said, " Our Bert helps her," and I was determined to give them no chance to say that I'd "do or die" alone Remarks that my brothers were just "rough country lads" came to my ears, and, though I laughed it off, it nettled one to find that Bert was letting his family cross-examine him and answering all their questions

pp 567-568

Since Mother refused to have Bert bring food, I was invited to tea at his home in his holidays He had been on some errand and met me as I came from school We looked into the confectioner's

" What would you like? " Bert asked

I said, "Some of everything," and he turned away with a laugh

" Well, you won't get any, not even a tantafflin [1] We don't have them till Sunday, so come thy ways [2] "

This banter and laughter continued till we all sat down to the table Bert and I sat on the sofa, and when his father took his place, I felt Bert draw himself together, humping himself up and bending his head over his plate When the father talked to me, the son twitched my dress or nudged me He hardly answered when his father spoke to him His mother kept her

[1] A tart or cake

[2] Pronounced "thee wees"

eyes down and spoke only in monosyllables But the father talked, and ate and handled the food as the man who paid for it all He chatted amiably with me, and his young daughter [Ada] told of some prank that made us laugh But his son nudged me so hard I felt I was misbehaving There was such a hateful feeling coming from Bert that I was almost frightened It was as if Prince Charming had changed into a toad

The father went out when the meal was over, and Mrs Lawrence said

" He hates his father That little minx will sit on his knee, but not the boy He keeps his distance, he never goes near him if he can help it He hates his father "

Bert's gaiety returned as his father's steps echoed in the entry, and when a couple of neighbours' girls came in, he was sparkling with them

p 570

A few days later, I had tea again at Bert's home The father had come from the pit and ate heartily of his dinner of meat and vegetables, ignoring the attitude of his wife and son who sat next to me on the sofa, humped up and uncivil The father talked of his work and of my grandmother,[1] and listened indulgently to his little daughter [Ada] I tried to find a word to fit Bert's attitude and discovered it was *vengeful* He was totally unlike the boy who lit up the rather drab room with a dancing light like a sunbeam He seemed to gather the gloom of the back yard into his being and

[1] She had a house in The Breach where my sister frequently stayed

crouch among the shabbiness like something sinister The wooden chairs, the well-worn sofa, the dresser with the ill-fitting drawers showed only honest wear and tear of years of service, but Bert seemed to send out jagged waves of hate and loathing that made me shudder The father was hungry after his day's work in the pit and ate heartily as he talked—evidently so used to the atmosphere of animosity that he did not feel it I wanted to get away The queer behaviour of mother and son made me tremble internally till I couldn't swallow my food The mother poured us more tea, and her husband drank thirstily

" I was dry," he said to me " You like milk in your tea? You should try it wi'out You'd soon get used to it, then you'd like it better You get the taste of the tea Milk just spoils the taste of the tea You just try wi'out "

He rose from the table and bade me " Come and see us again before long," and went out immediately

As his step echoed in the entry, his son shed his malignancy

pp 572-573

(An evening at the Haggs)

How hard Bert worked, till he was flushed and panting And when we all could "get around", he declared it was time to learn the waltz, and held forth very wisely on the grace and elegance of the waltz

" Now one, two, three," but I always broke into a polka, and next week he announced

" I was wrong—it should be one, two, three, four "

" But who told you? " we inquired

And, reddening, he admitted it was his father, and having broken the ice and allowed his father to have any good points, he talked a lot about Mr Lawrence's knowledge of dancing It was easy to see he was proud of him as an authority on dancing

" I don't know anybody else's father who knows the science about dancing, do you? Some can dance, of course, but Father knows how to teach it," he says

And he repeated his father's praise of the different dances as I ran down to the Warren with him on his way home

As we slowly grew more adept, we complained that our kitchen floor was too small for us all to be up together, but Bert dismissed the notion

" Father says you should be able to dance on a threepeny bit Come on, now, and everybody sing "

So we sang, and danced, and laughed, and enjoyed it all

pp 574-575

Bert did not visit us for a week or two, and sadness seemed to envelop the world, for he was sickening with a cold Then there was a heavy, grey fog for several days, and he went down with pneumonia Daily at school we talked of the tragedy of Mrs Lawrence's life and the progress of Bert's illness As the crisis approached, there seemed a breathlessness among people " Eh, that Bertie Lawrence'll ne'er o'er break

it," would say a woman to me on my way to school, or " It'll be the biggest wonder in t'world if he isna laid wi' t'other lad," would say a collier on my way home Our house was stricken Father and Mother talked of Mrs Lawrence's troubles, which were never out of Mother's mind, while we waited for the crisis

The crisis passed, the long slow climb back to health began I went to see Bert one Sunday after tea The night was black and foggy, and the lights of our house beckoned to me as I turned into the pasture where only darkness and emptiness surrounded and almost daunted me Down the Warren along the bridle path, over the fence into the road that skirted the Reservoir, down Engine Lane, past the pit, past the sheep-bridge, by the Breach, up the Brickyard Closes, and I was at their bay window Up the entry into the back yard where the only light was over the scullery My knock brought footsteps downstairs, and Mrs Lawrence held a light to see who was at the door

" Why, child! " she exclaimed, " this black night! Aye, he'll be pleased to see you I tell him his heart's more at your house than at ours "

I followed her upstairs and down a narrow, narrow passage to a tiny bare room like a big box, where Bert lay on a tumbled bed, gaunt, flushed, and bright-eyed, his cheeks sunken, the bones showing keenly, but the old smile on his face—his gaiety springing back to life His voice wavered and cracked and went hoarse as he asked about us all and about the animals and what we

had been doing and if we missed him He was already planning his next visit eagerly

Bert tossed ceaselessly on the bed, tumbling the clothes about He seemed like a jackknife opening and shutting

He shook his head violently, and in his cracked voice declared

" I can't—I can't keep still a moment I am twitching all over Look, I can't control myself! " He giggled as his knees shot up and down " You hold me She can't! "

" Eh, child, he wants me to hold him," said Mrs Lawrence " He wants me to hold him on my lap like a child, but I can't He's too big and too long And thin as he is, he's too heavy for me now "

" Don't be a baby," I laughed at him

" I'm not," he wheezed " I just want somebody to hold me still It's awful, twitching like this " He giggled again " I think Mother should tie me down with ropes "

Bert coughed and seemed exhausted, lying flushed and bright-eyed, but his knees shot up and down

I was overcome with pity, and knew that if I did not soon get out I should cry, and though they begged me to stay, I dared not and made the excuse I must go on to service

p 576

It was a long time before Bert drove up [to the Haggs] with Father, and we all made much of him, delighted at his recovery

pp 583-583

When sufficiently recovered, Bert became a pupil-teacher [1902] He was in the boys' department of the school[1] connected with the Chapel we all attended He was to take lessons from the headmaster [George Holderness] for an hour before school commenced, then teach a class I had lessons from the headmaster from eight till nine in the girls' department Bert begged me to look out for him and "give him a smile to cheer", for he was frightened to death The sort of boy he was not strong enough to play with he was now to try to teach All the boys' classes were in the one big room used for Sunday School, and there was one classroom besides On the mornings he took his class of boys for a lesson in the classroom, I sent in my watch to be set correctly, and he generally sent a scribbled note back It was always signed "D H L", and it was by his initials he preferred to be called He looked a little anxious with his forty-odd boys passing in to their seats

pp 588-589

Bert's Saturday visits were a matter of course with us

We all looked to Bert for some special delight My mother liked his light chat as he rested after the long walk Then others of us would take him into the wood which held an attraction at every season of the year, and when he brought a paint box and sat painting a

[1] The British School, Albert Street

little scene, we thought him wonderful At the crowded tea-table, we all liked to talk, and after tea there were generally some lessons done, for my sister [Jessie], now a pupil-teacher in the village a mile from home, was his pupil He insisted on helping her from the first, and they would pore over their books at a side table while the evening work went on—milking, bathing the little children before the kitchen fire, finishing up some baking perhaps And then, all being finished, we would join together again and sing songs, or sometimes we would dance, and sometimes read aloud in turn from a book we all wanted to read at once It was a splendid time for all of us, and Bert was always the centre to whom we all looked as leader, a position he thoroughly enjoyed

From this jollity I had to withdraw because of approaching examinations I gave up every diversion to reserve my energy for the long day at school, the long walk, and the evening's study, and soon I was little more than an outsider in the family fun But Bert grew more popular, for now the little children were old enough to appreciate him, and they confided secrets in him, showed him their playing place in the wood, and begged for stories from him And always there was a book we "simply must" read that Bert brought from the library He would gather currants from the bushes in the garden, and peel apples for tea in summer or make toast in winter Outside he found many things to do with my brothers at their work

The annual ratting, when the old staddles[1] of the stacks were pulled away to make room for the new, was a time of great excitement, and Bert was ruddy and bright-eyed with exertion

p 609

Bert began to change, and I asked him if College was doing it, or was it Schopenhauer?

" Life," he said "and it gives me spiritual dyspepsia It's right You can have spiritual dyspepsia You used to say you had intelligence in your feet when you followed the bridle path in the dark Well, I've got dyspepsia in my soul!"

He was not finding at College that for which he was always searching—" Truth and Beauty," he called it

The books he introduced to the farm, my mother said sadly, she never thought to see under her roof Darwin's *Origin of Species*, and Huxley and Haeckel

pp 610-611

There were many who began to dread the loneliness they were bound to feel as College drew to a close and the life of which Bert had been the centre would be over The market for assistant masters seemed to be glutted, and though he passed the examinations with six distinctions, he had to wait three months before obtaining a post at a salary he considered fair He spent much of his time at the farm, helping with the work The dread of his leaving hung over all, and yet he

[1] Foundation logs and branches on which the stacks were built

must have begun to feel that his dependence upon his family had grown irksome

Eventually in October [1908] he was appointed assistant master at a school in Croydon Why need fate have taken him so far away? we wondered Why need he go to London? And yet it seemed right that he should go to London He had sometimes hinted that he feared the world would drag him away its whole width from the valley he loved so deeply Having become accustomed to the fret of his going, to us it seemed very fit that his brilliance should have a London polish He left a blank that no other could fill, and there was envy of those who had gained him His first letters were full of the anguish of the loss of the old life Sorrow had to be smothered in order to cheer him Everyone of the group watched for a letter signed with the magic initials D H L